

THE HIDDEN WITCH



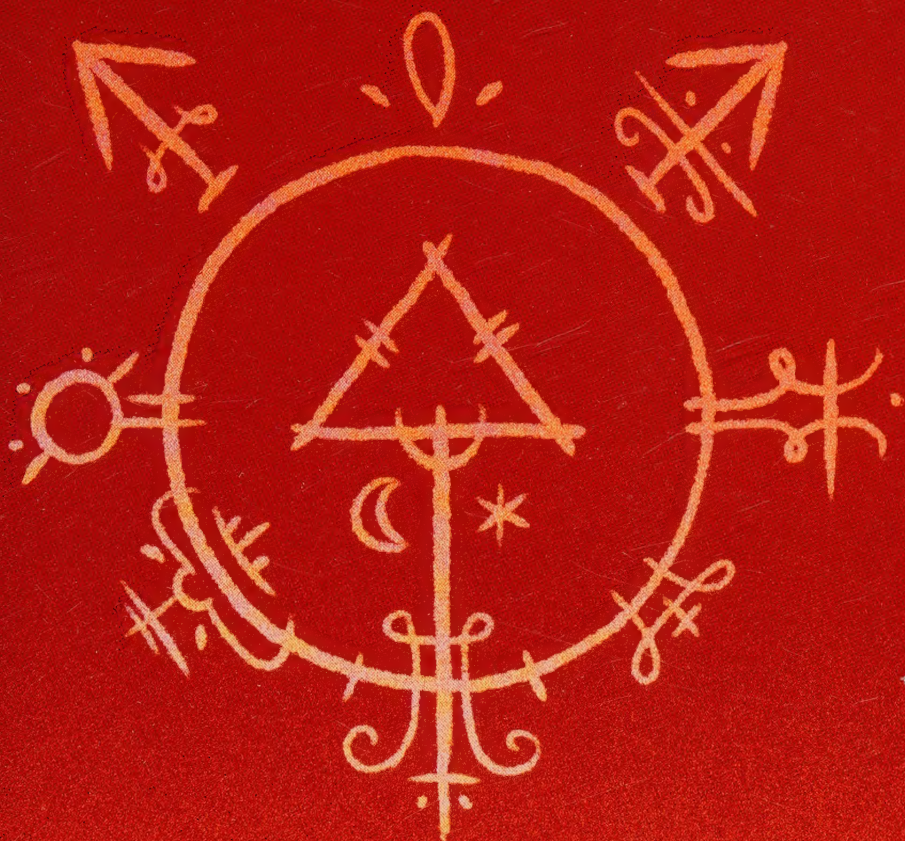
MOLLY KNOX OSTERAG

AUTHOR OF THE WITCH BOY

 SCHOLASTIC



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2021 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation



MOLLY KNOX ✧ STERTAG

THE
HIDDEN
WITCH



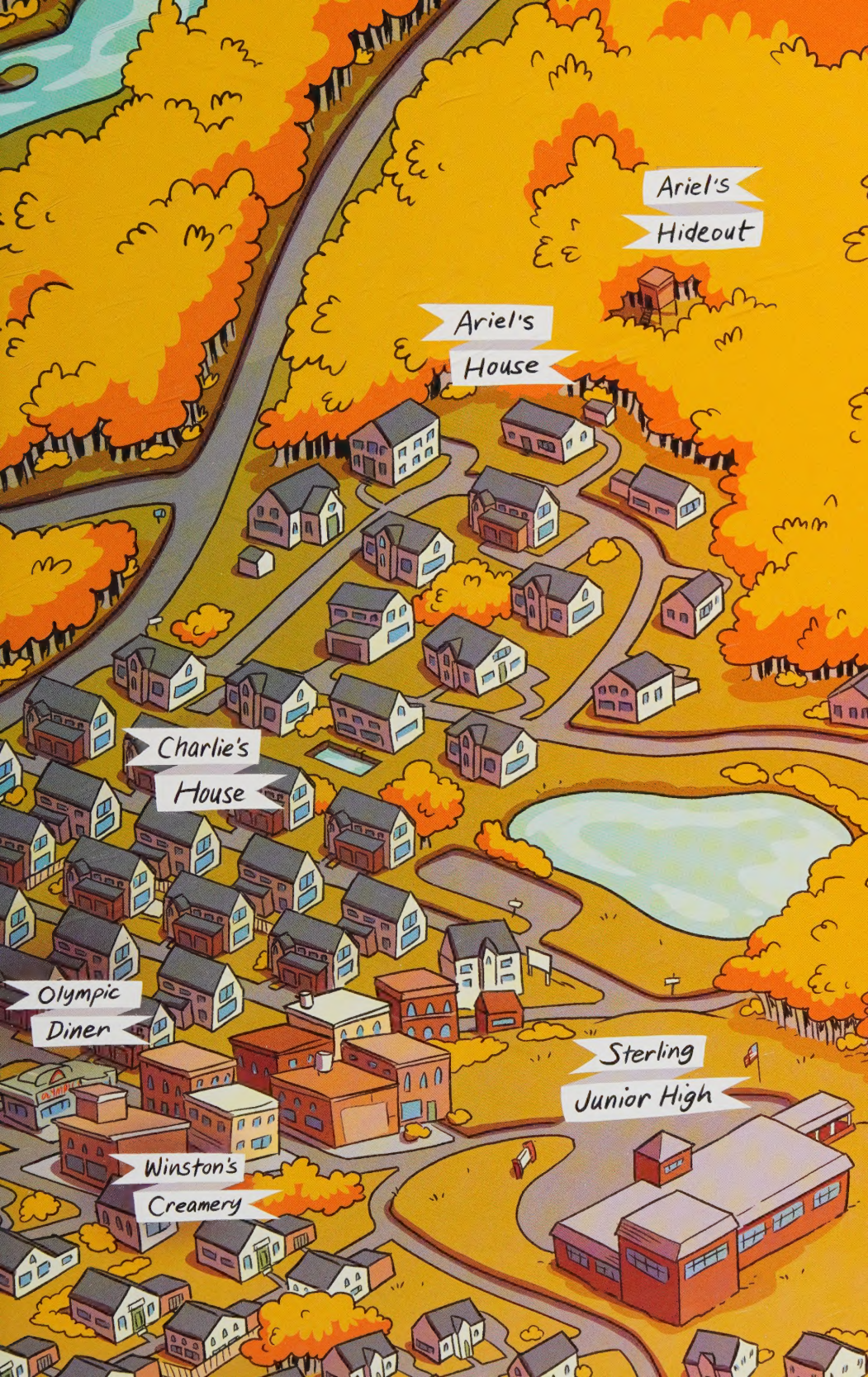
AN IMPRINT OF

 SCHOLASTIC



the Vanissen
House

Protection
Stones



Ariel's
Hideout

Ariel's
House

Charlie's
House

Olympic
Diner

Winston's
Creamery

Sterling
Junior High

**This book is dedicated to Noelle,
who is my very favorite witch.**

Copyright © 2018 by Molly Knox Ostertag

All rights reserved. Published by Graphix, an imprint of Scholastic Inc.,
Publishers since 1920. SCHOLASTIC, GRAPHIX, and associated logos are
trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

The publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any
responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval
system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the
publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc.,
Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are
either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any
resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments,
events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Library of Congress Control Number Available

ISBN 978-1-338-25376-4 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-338-25375-7 (paperback)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

18 19 20 21 22

Printed in China 38

First edition, November 2018

Edited by Amanda Maciel

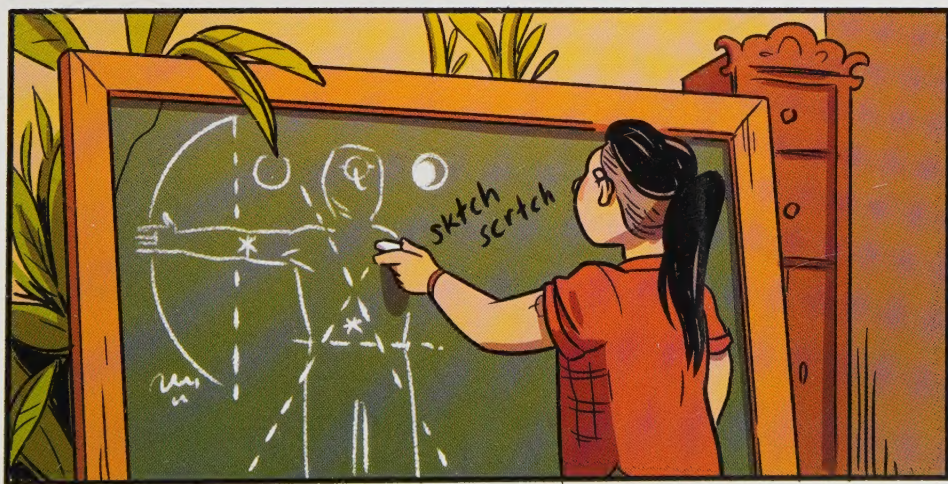
Lettering and Color by Molly Knox Ostertag

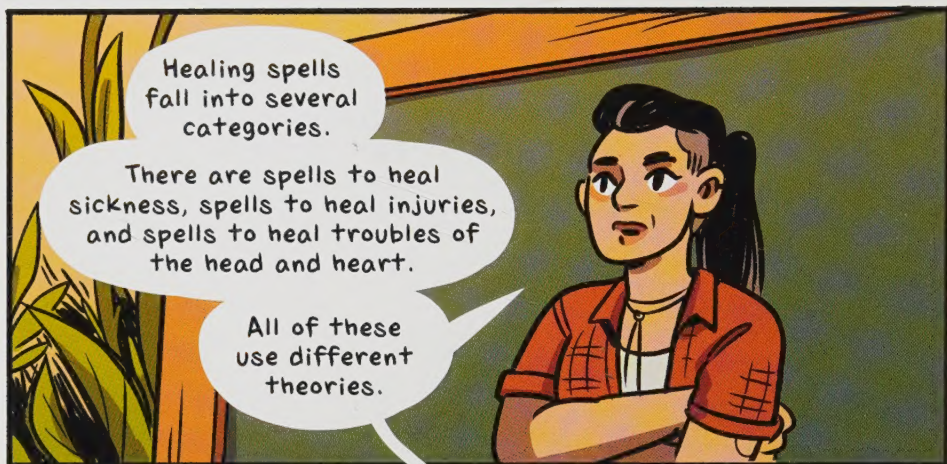
Additional color by Niki Smith

Author photo © Leslie Ranne

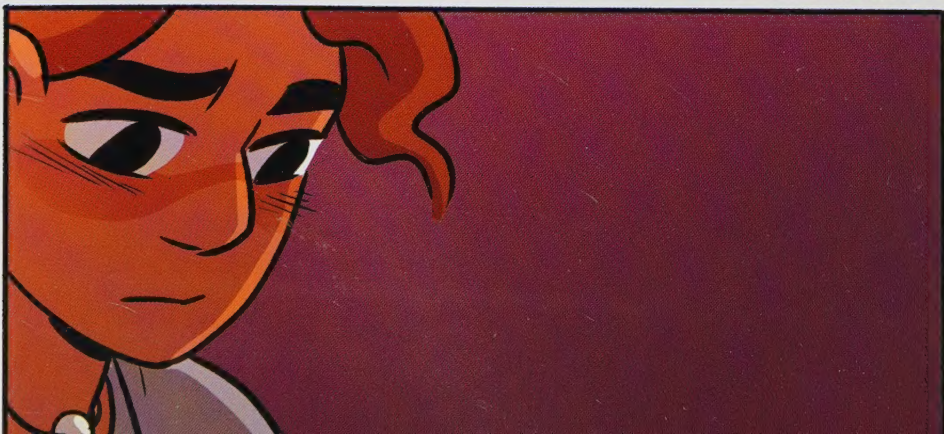
Book design by Molly Knox Ostertag and Phil Falco

Creative Director: David Saylor





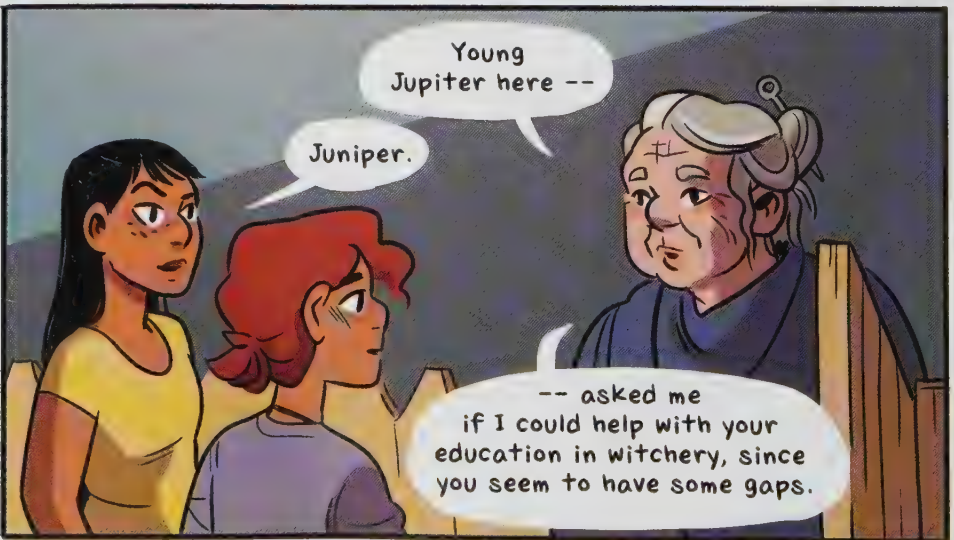






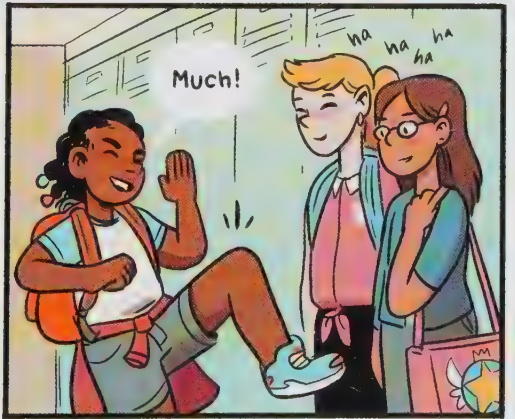
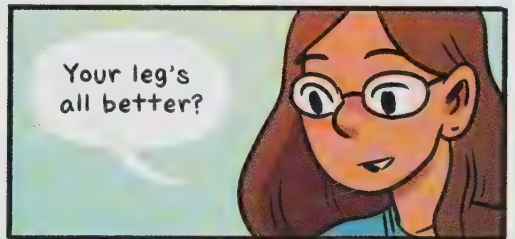




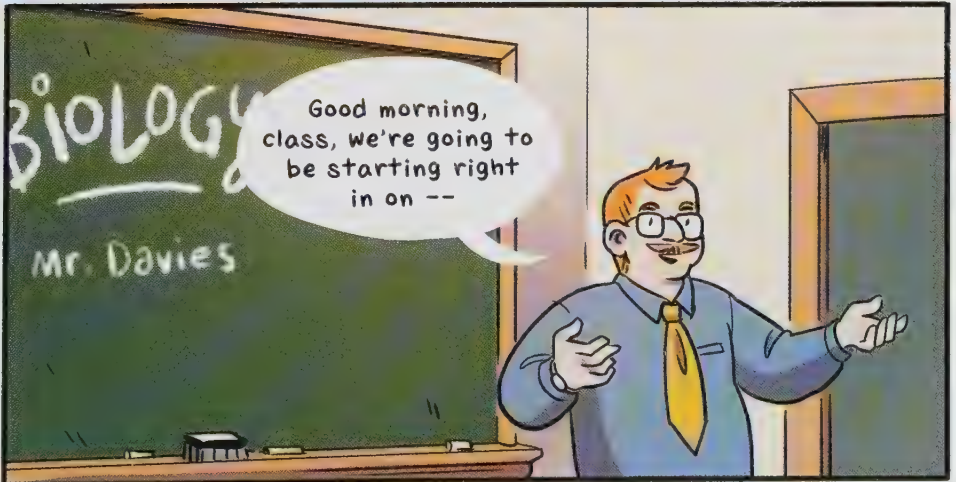
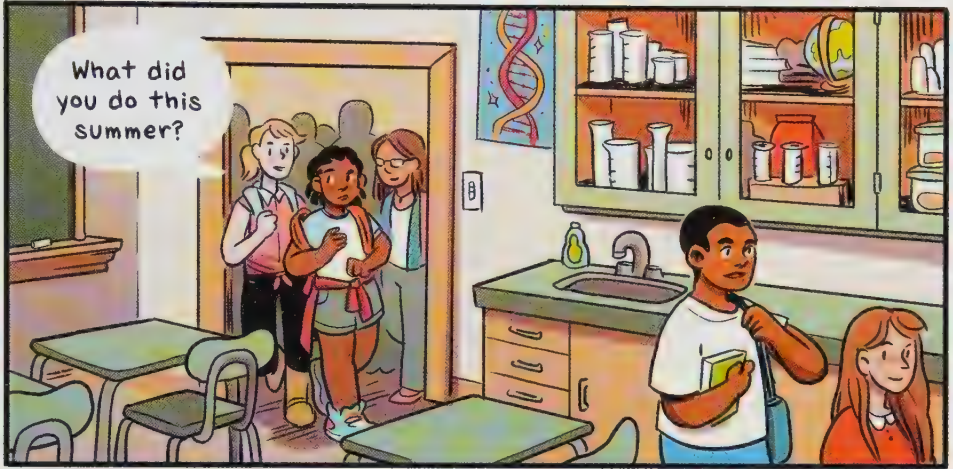










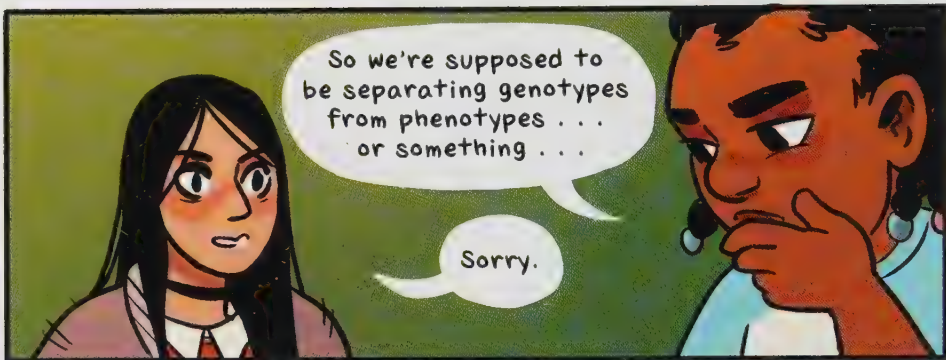


















... So I have picked up a lot,
ever since I was ten and I realized
that I could sit in the window and
eavesdrop on Iris's classes.

There's still
a lot of stuff I don't
know, though --

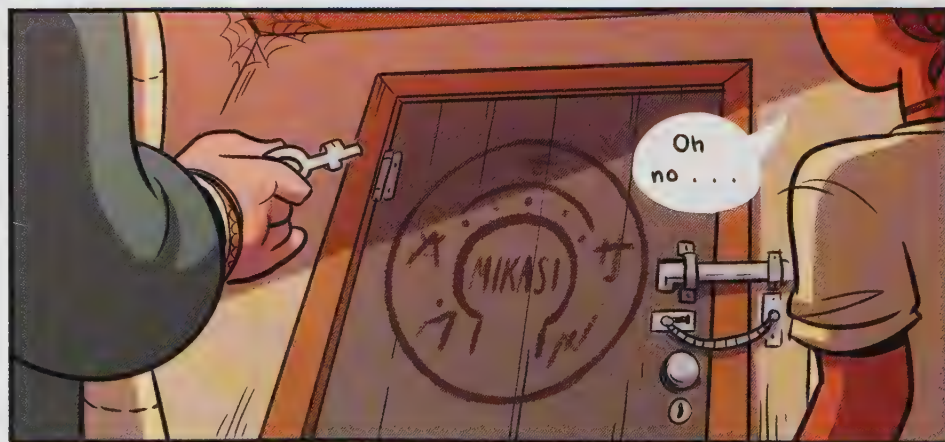


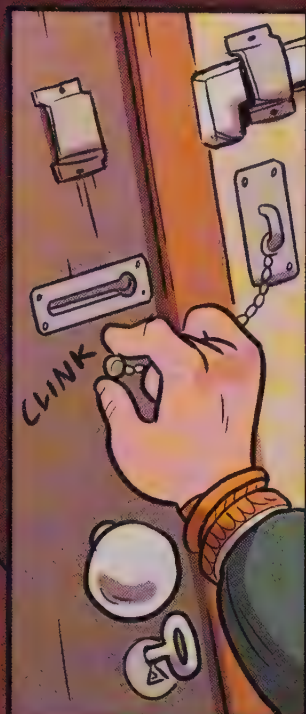
Yes, you've missed a
good deal of the *theory* of
witchery. Also known as
the boring parts.

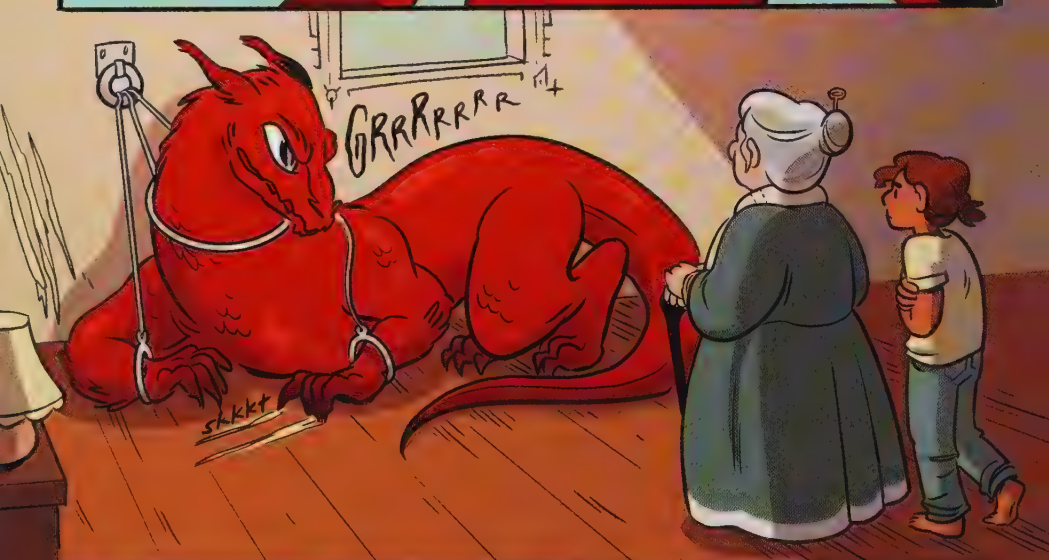
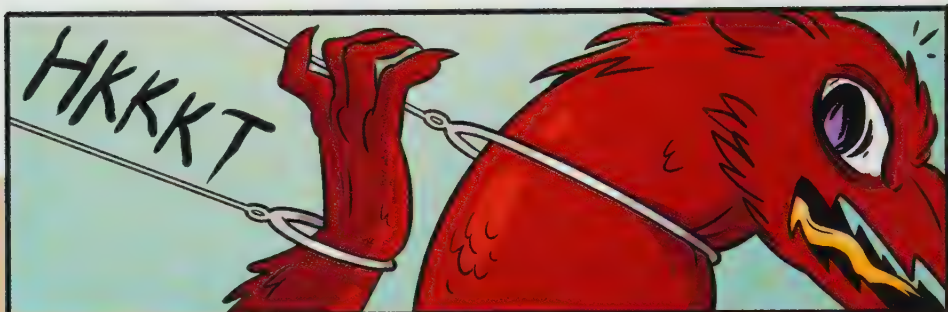
Pass me
that green glass
bottle.

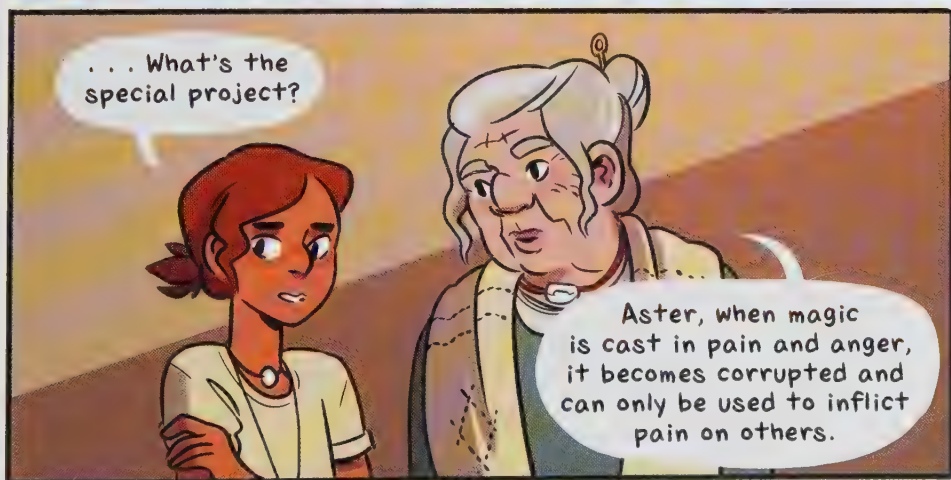


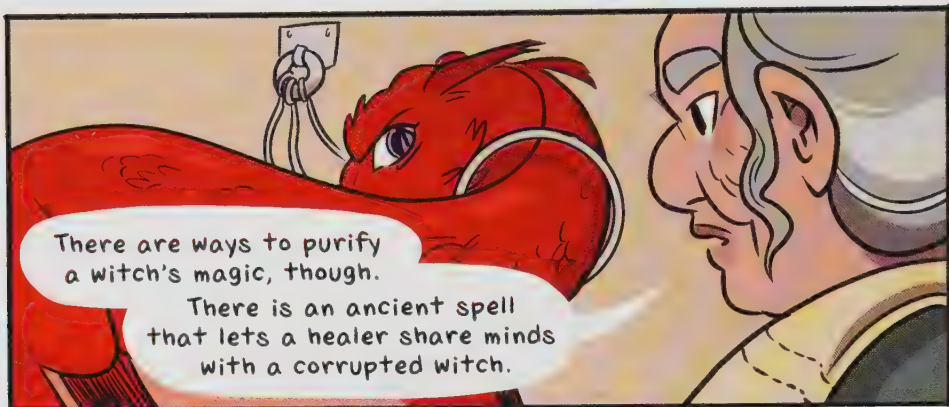


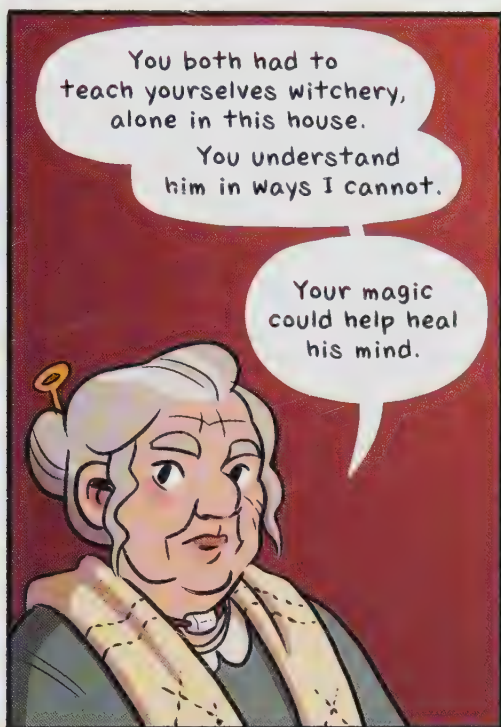
















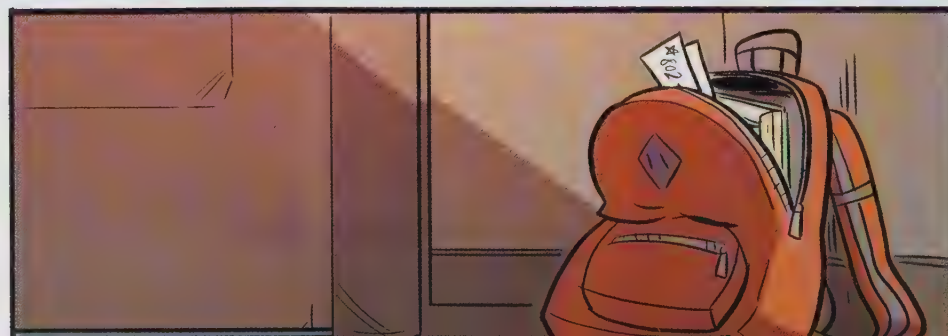
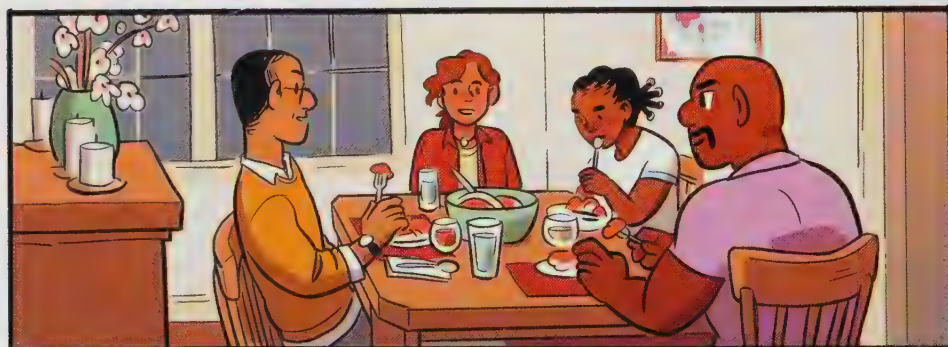




Yeah . . .

Hey, want to see this new spell I learned last week?

Totally!

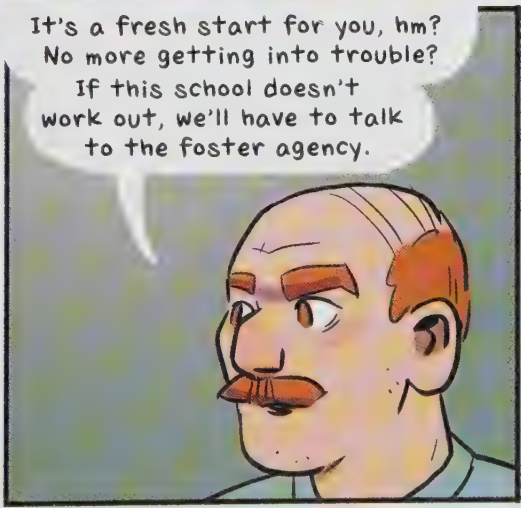




How was
your first day at
Sterling, Ariel?

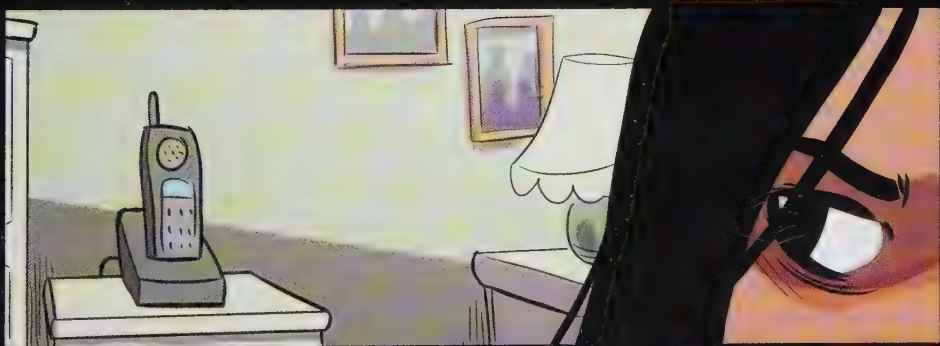
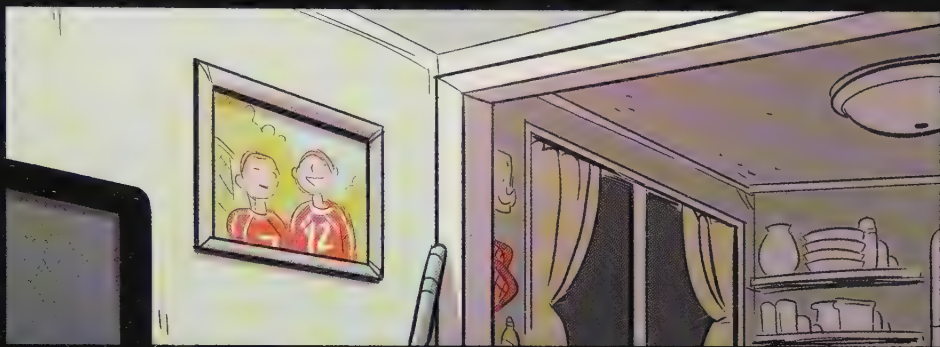


Fine.

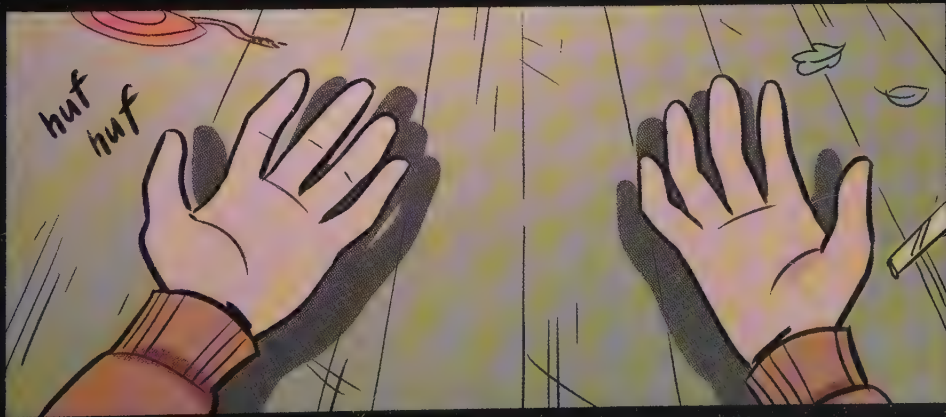


It's a fresh start for you, hm?
No more getting into trouble?
If this school doesn't
work out, we'll have to talk
to the foster agency.











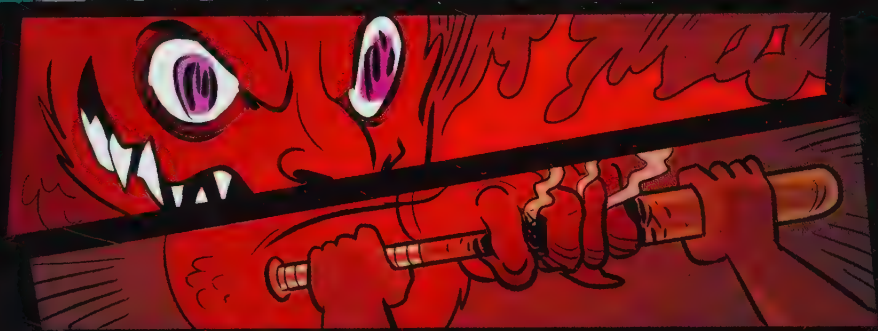
When are
you gonna learn that
you just can't trust
other people?



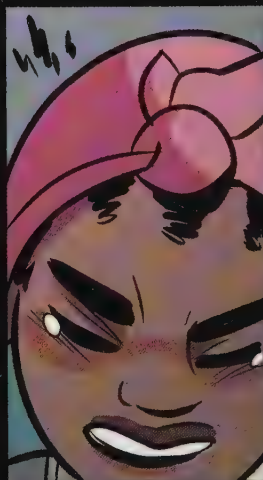
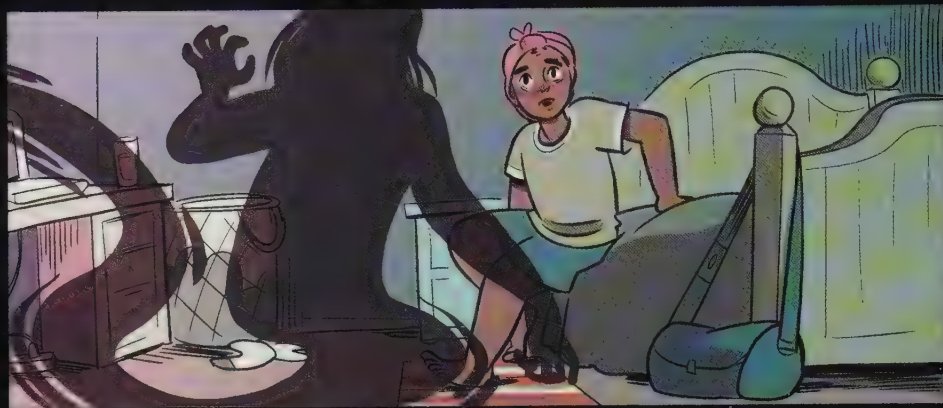
Charlie
Martin-West.

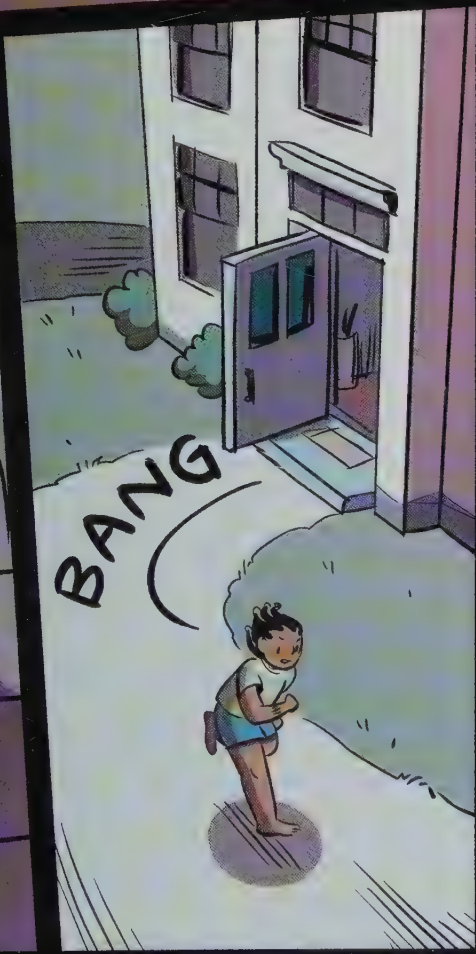
Find her,
and give her
a scare.





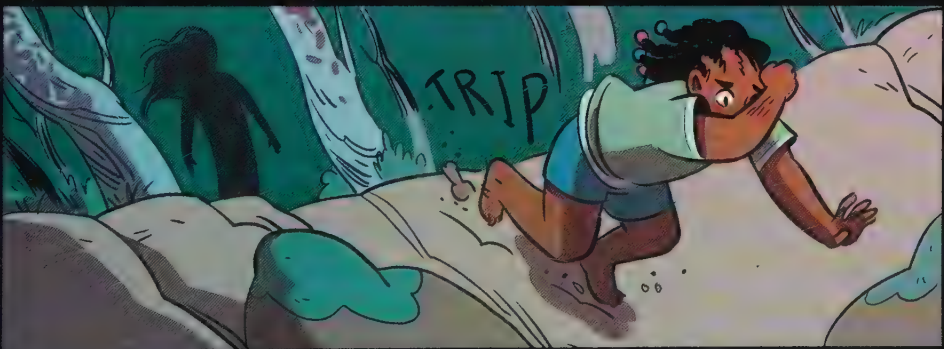




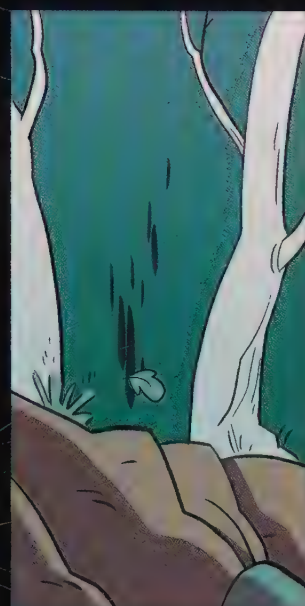


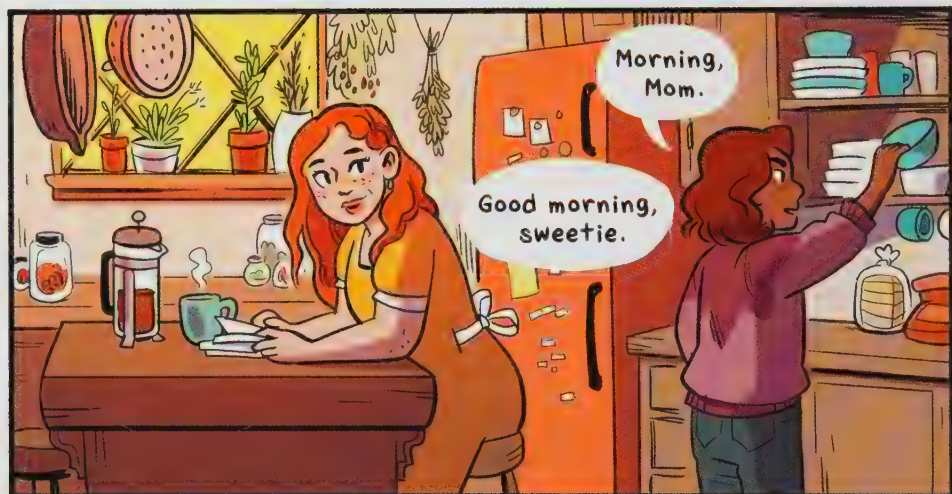
Okay, magic
is real, we've been over
this, and something weird
is definitely going on . . .

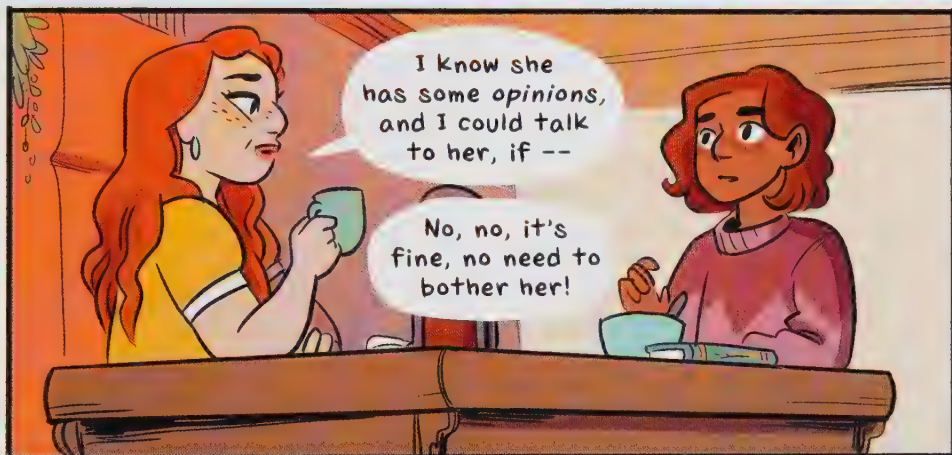
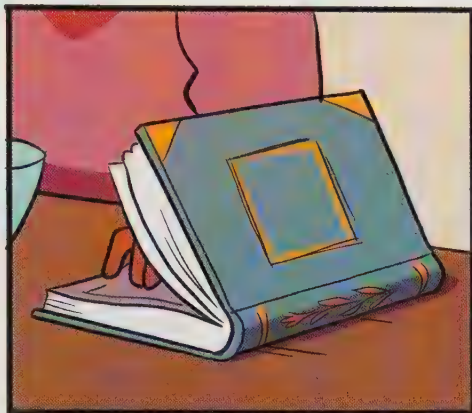












Just this
once.

Don't let your sister
see you drinking this. We
didn't let her have coffee
until she was fourteen.



Tell you what: If
you get me some eggs, I'll
whip up an omelette.

Okay!



This is
kinda gross,
anyway.





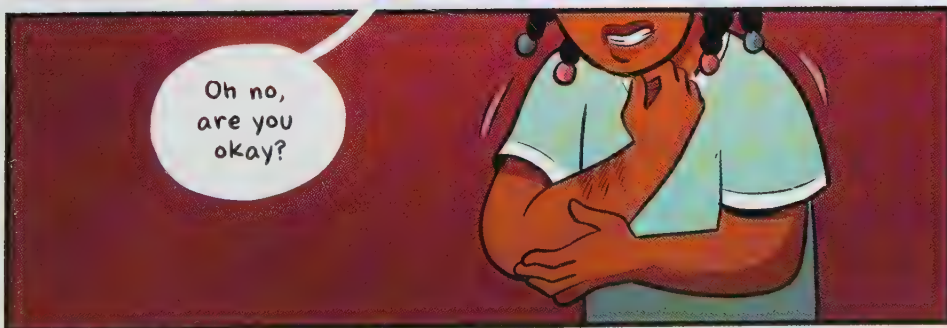
Aster!



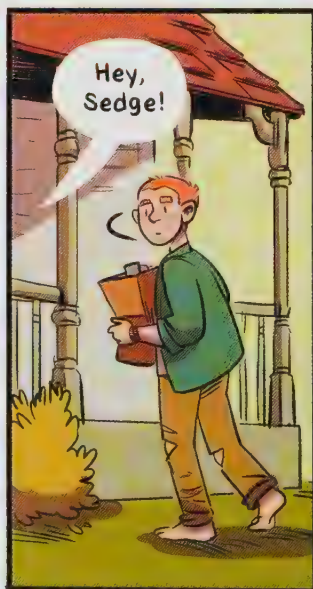
Charlie?
What are you
doing here?

Nice
to see you,
too.

If my
parents see
you here --



Oh no,
are you
okay?







I guess.



That Mikasi
guy? Oh my god.
So scary.

I hit
him in the
face!

Uh, yeah.



So . . . what's it
like? Going to school
and living in town
and everything?



It's normal.
Well, I guess
it wouldn't be
normal for you.



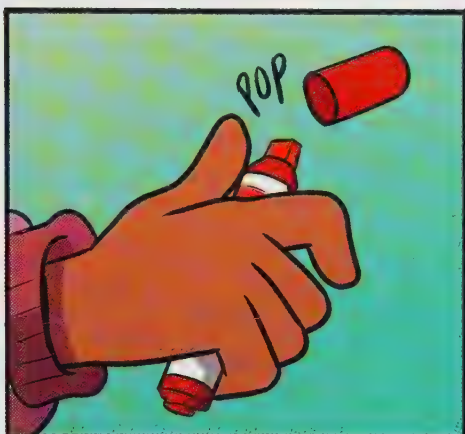
I get on a big yellow bus and
go to a brick building with a bunch
of other kids where we eat gross
food and have to learn math.

That
doesn't sound
too bad . . .

You're
underestimating
how nasty the
food is.













Ah, it
must have
left.

No.

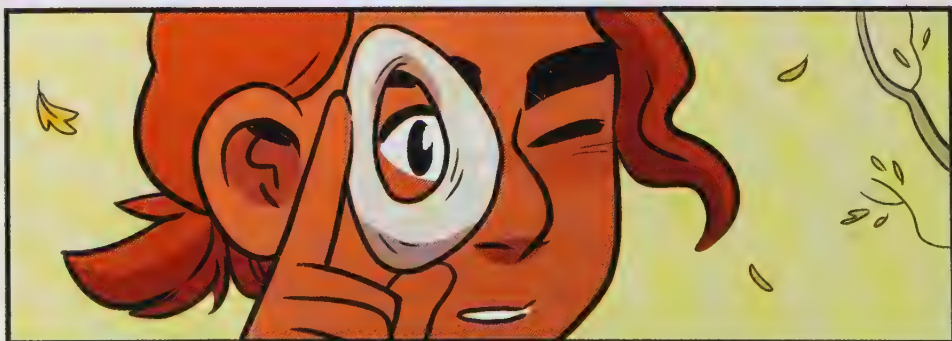


Can you
see it?

I'm not
sure . . .



Try looking
through my
eyestone.





That's so
creepy!

It looks
like . . . is
it a kid?

It is
a Fetch.



It is a witch's
curse given form. It
is dark, old magic.



Why would
someone want
to curse
you?

I don't
know! I'm
so nice!

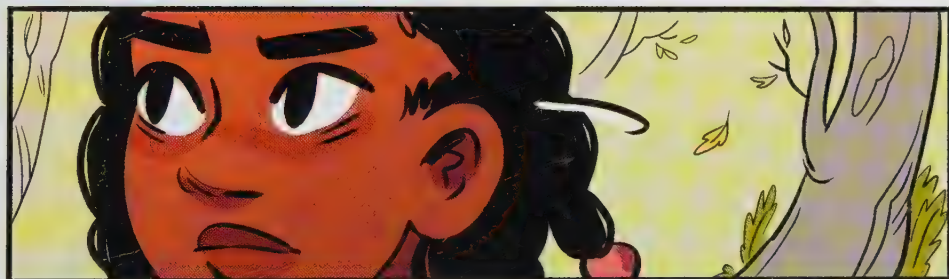


We do not do
this magic in the
Vanissen family.

A Fetch is as
dangerous to the witch
as it is to her victim.

If it's not
someone in our family,
who could it be?









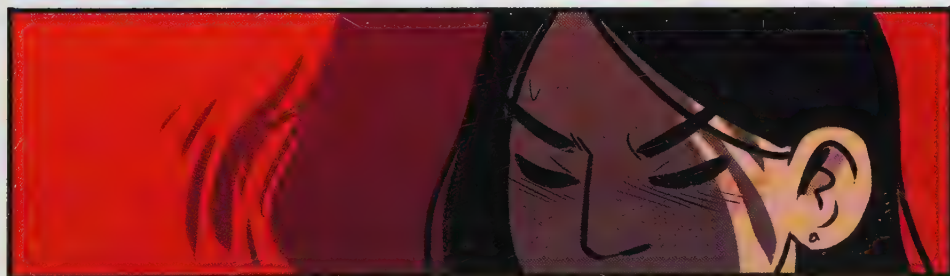
You
just . . .

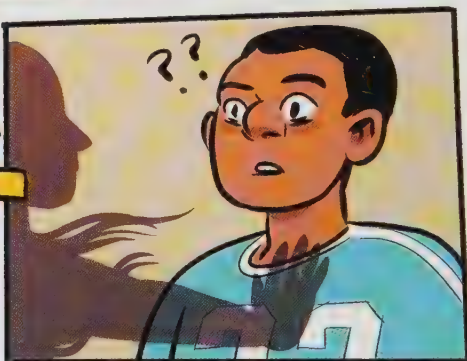
You seem
to know so much
about magic.
And you actually
talk to me about it,
instead of . . .

Anyway, I'll
help if you promise
to teach me.

You have
yourself a
deal.

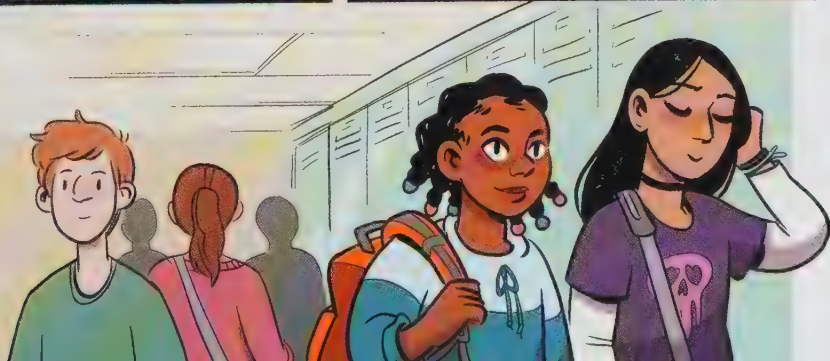




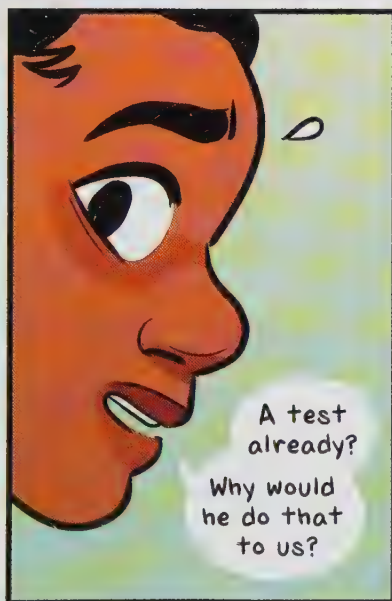
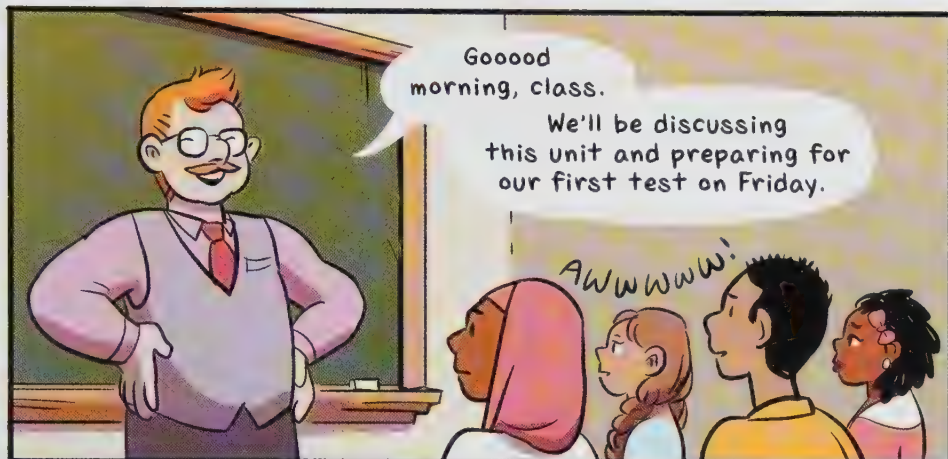


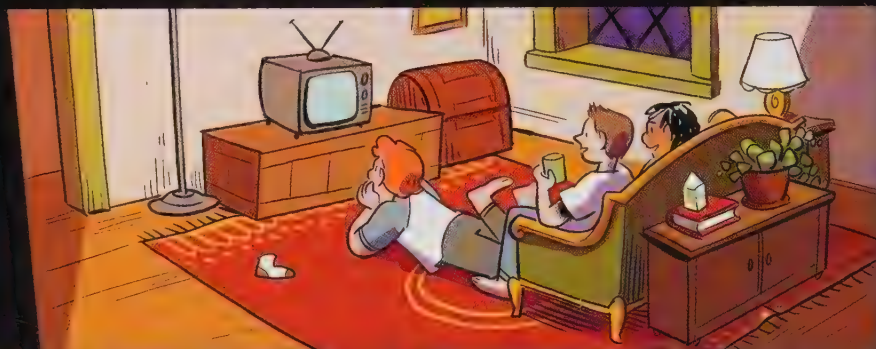
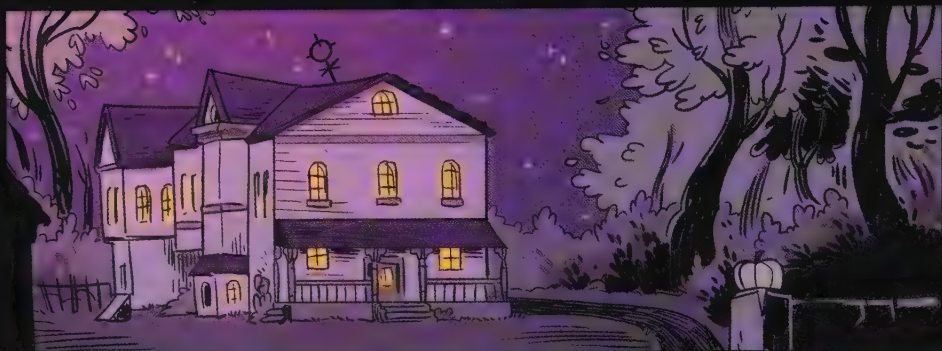










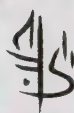






Allow the
doors in your mind
to open.

You, too,
brother. Look
at the candle.



GRRRR

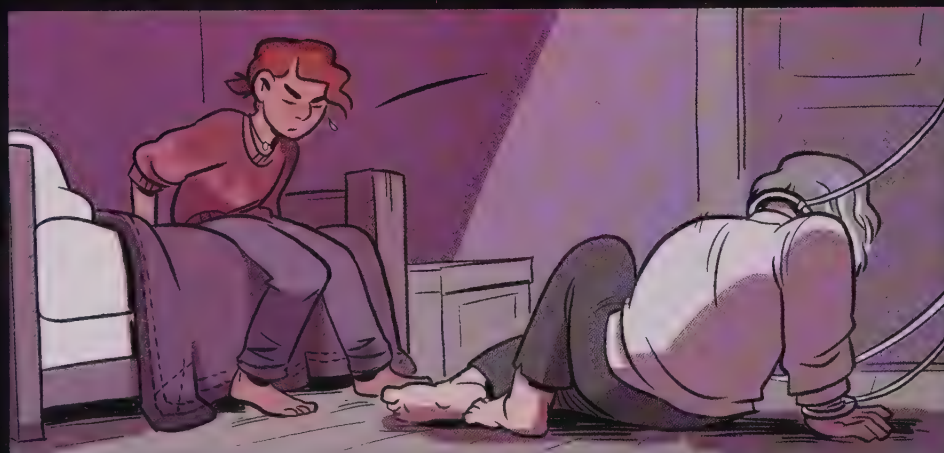






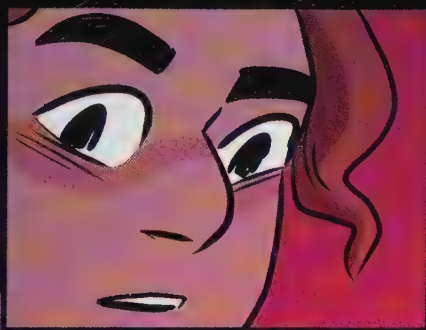








I'm
sorry . . .



I'm sorry,
Wynonna.



Hello,
Mikasi.

Who are you?
Where . . . where
am I?

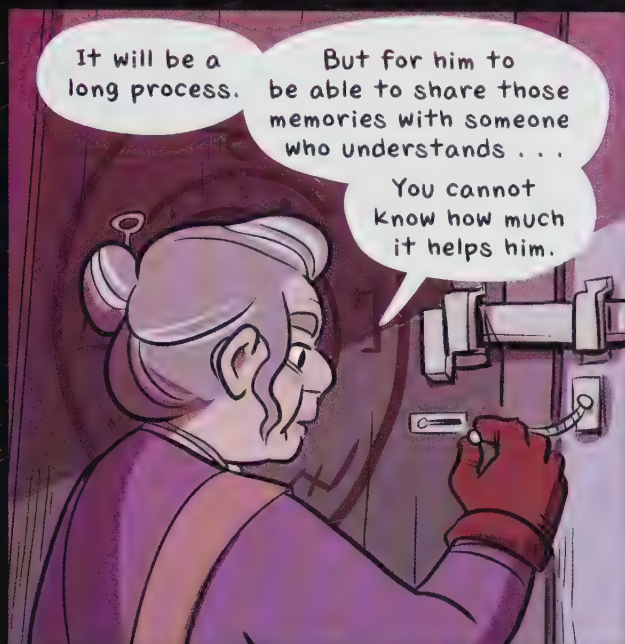
Sis,
you're so
old . . .

It's all
right, shh.





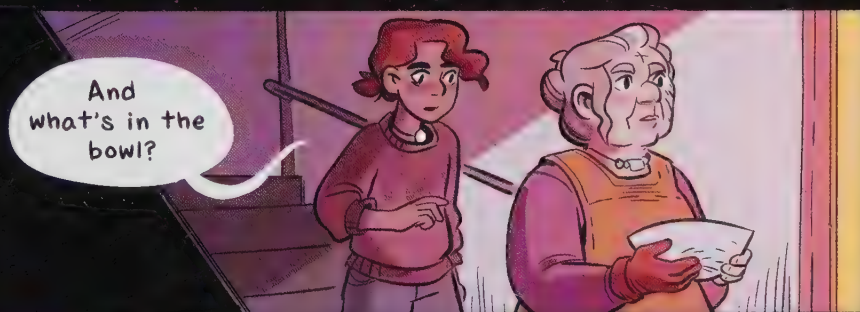
Is he . . .
better?



It will be a
long process.

But for him to
be able to share those
memories with someone
who understands . . .

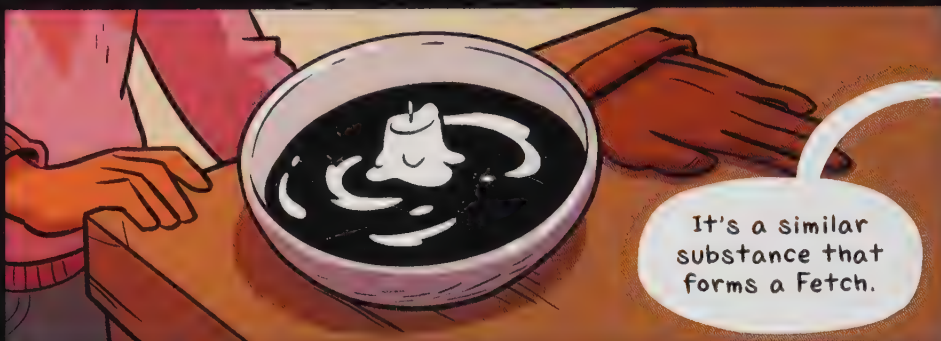
You cannot
know how much
it helps him.



And
what's in the
bowl?



His corruption
and his pain.



It's a similar substance that forms a Fetch.



CLK CLK
Magic corrupted by darkness.



The more a witch hates, the more she -- or he -- curses, the stronger it grows.



Left unchecked, a Fetch will turn on the witch and consume them.



So that's his magic?



Some of it.

If we are successful, by the end of this process Mikasi won't have magic anymore.



But the darkness that eats at his mind . . . hopefully that will be gone, as well.

And I will have my brother back.

That's all I want.



What's this?



Chamomile tea, plenty of honey.

And . . .



We don't have any cookies, but there's still some of Hazel's birthday cake left.



You've just helped
Mikasi get rid of years
of bad memories and
black magic.

It can be a
bit of a shock to
the system.



I think you
deserve some
dessert.





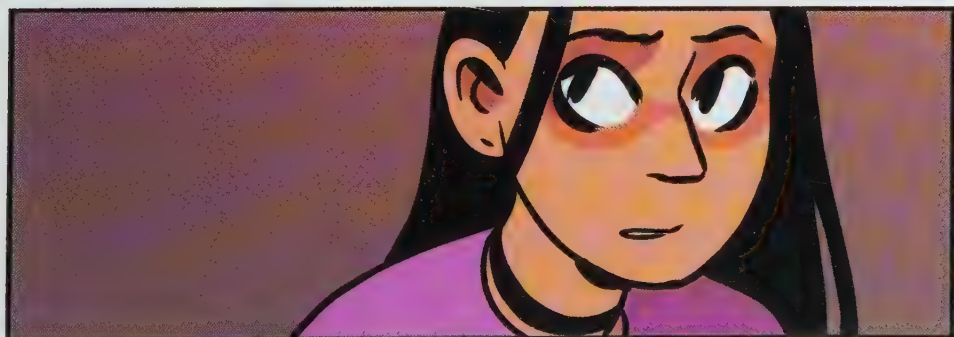


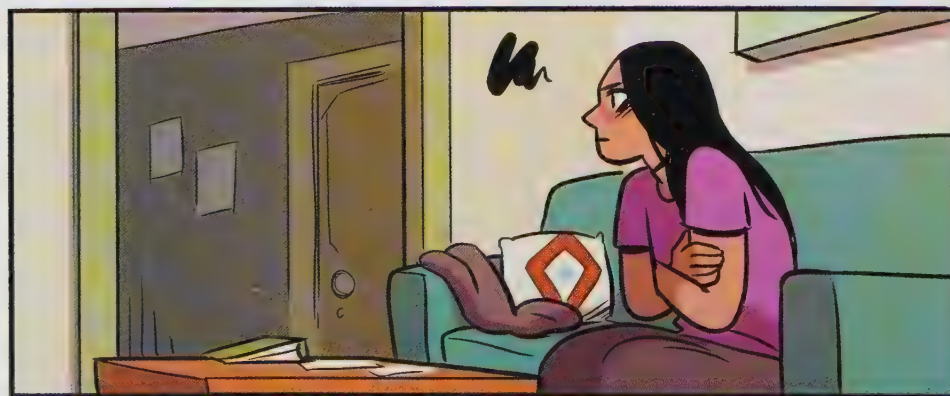


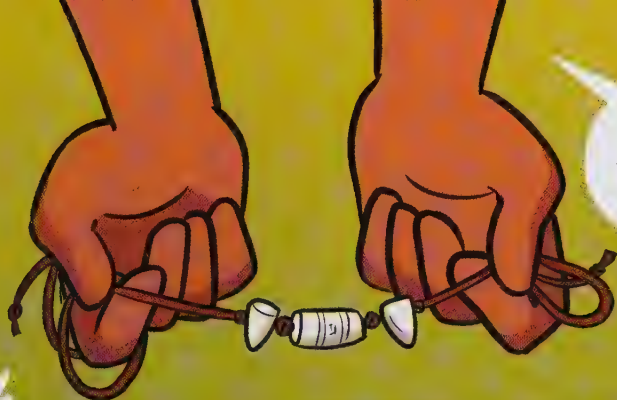
Come onnn, I know Mr. Davies was out today, but you still should learn this!

POKE

Aster!







You can wear it however you want, or just keep it in your pocket, but make sure to keep it on you.



Cool!

Do you wanna stay for dinner?
We're almost done with our homework, and Ariel is really cool.



I actually have to do something with my grandmother tonight . . .

Aw!













Well . . . yeah. I've always been good at talking to people. But lately, now that we're almost in high school . . .

I don't know, sometimes I feel like everyone got a message about how to act, and I missed it.



That's why I like you!

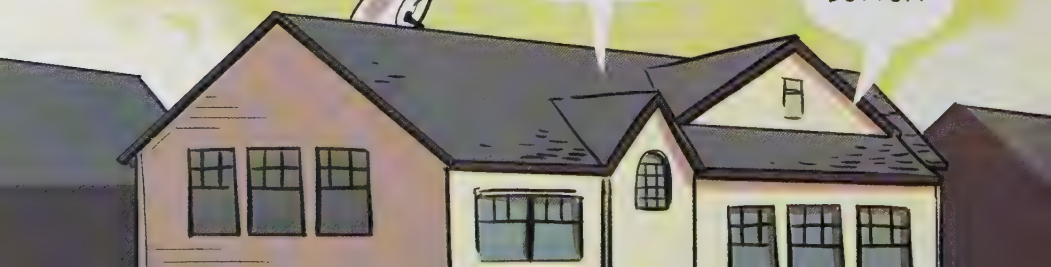
Because I don't know how to act?

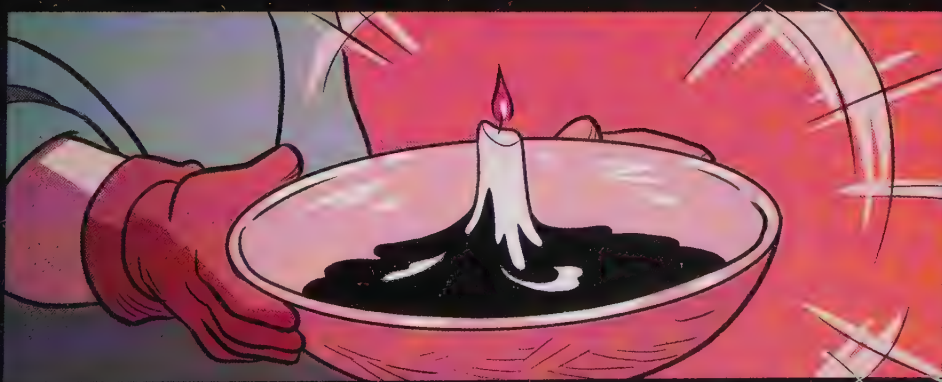
Because you don't think there's, like, a right way to act. You're just doing your thing.



Can I come to your basketball game?

You better!









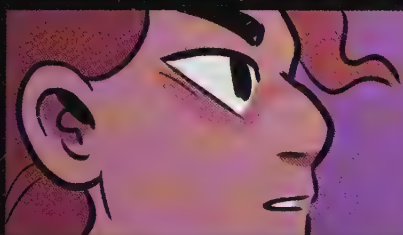
I gave Charlie
her protection
charm today.

I wonder
who cursed
her.

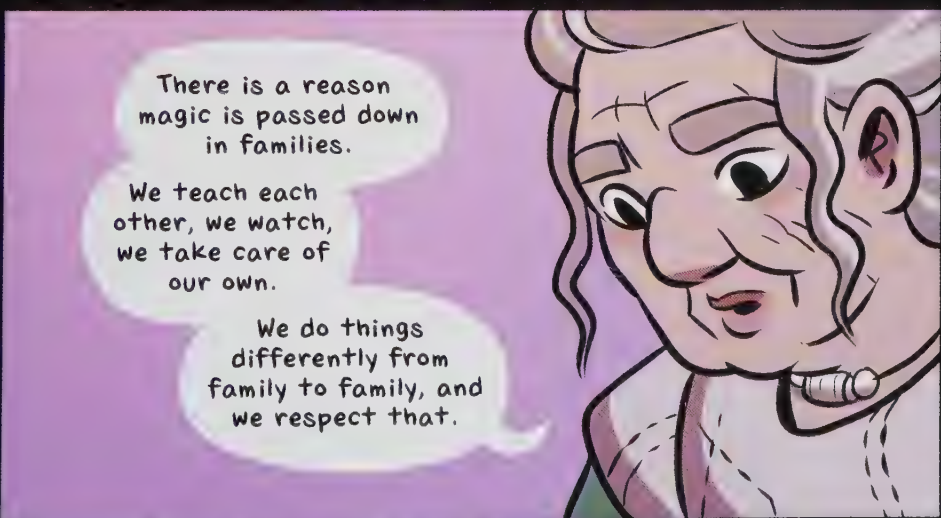


It is sad that this
witch's family didn't
teach her better.

Or him.



Shouldn't we try
to find out who it is?
Stop their magic from
becoming corrupted?



There is a reason
magic is passed down
in families.

We teach each
other, we watch,
we take care of
our own.

We do things
differently from
family to family, and
we respect that.



Magical families
used to go to war against
each other, but long ago we
signed a treaty for peace.

Now we help each
other where we can, and
stay out of each other's
way when we can't.

sigh

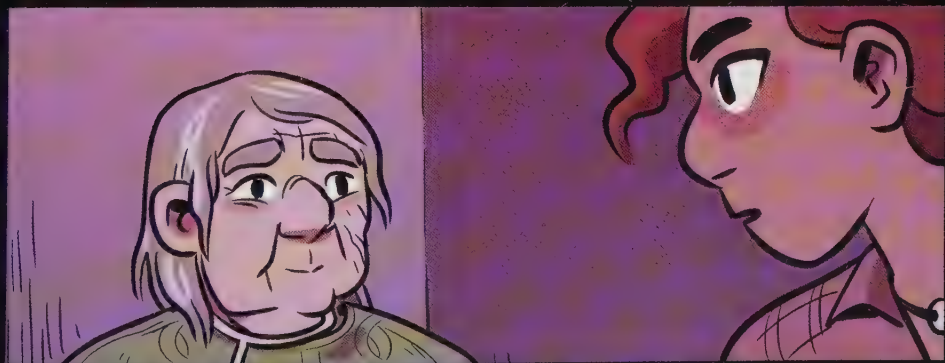
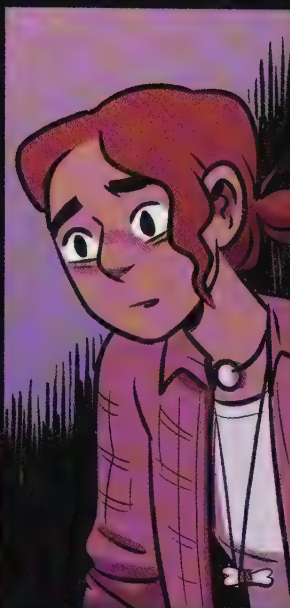


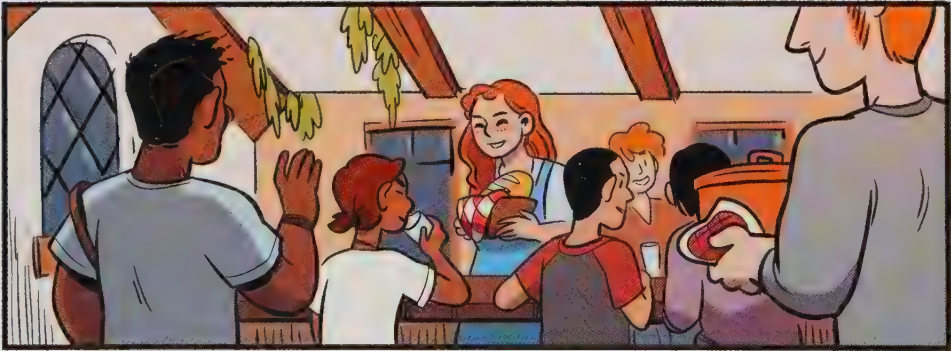
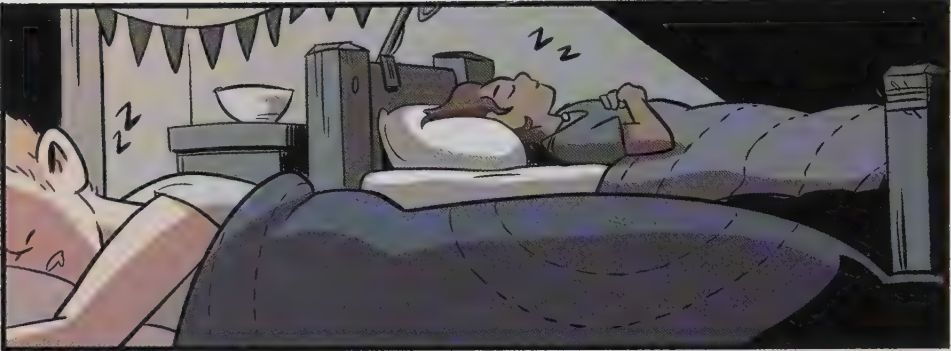
To spiral into
hate . . . at first it
feels good and right.
You have been hurt,
and so you hurt others.

Rest,
brother.



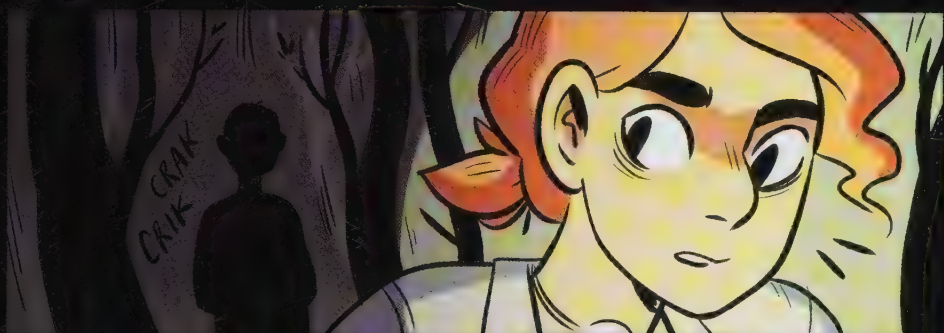
The darkness
coils inside you and you
cannot stop it, and one day
you realize that there is
no difference between you
and the darkness.



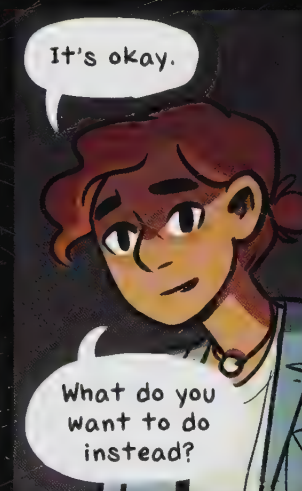
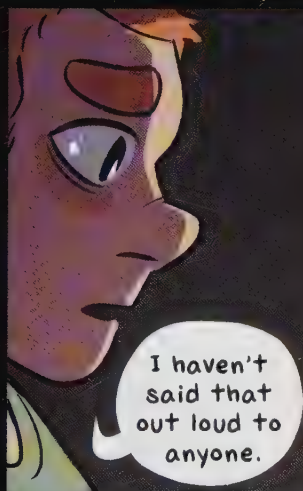
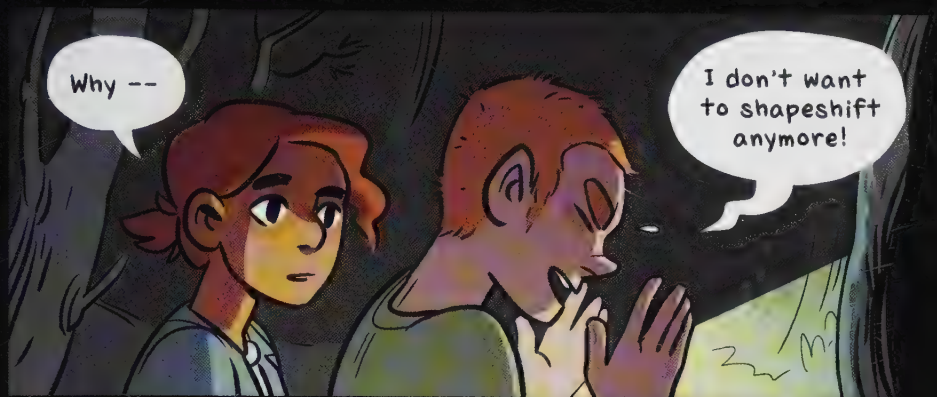


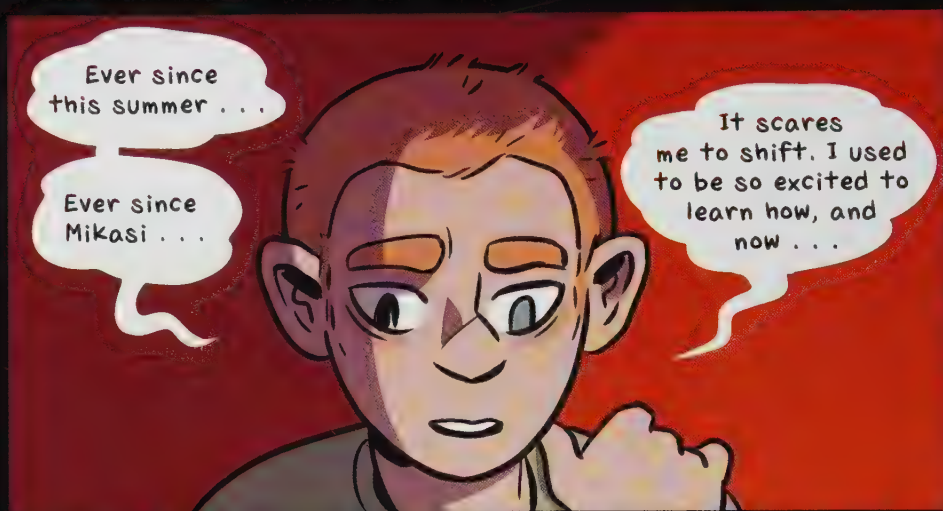
















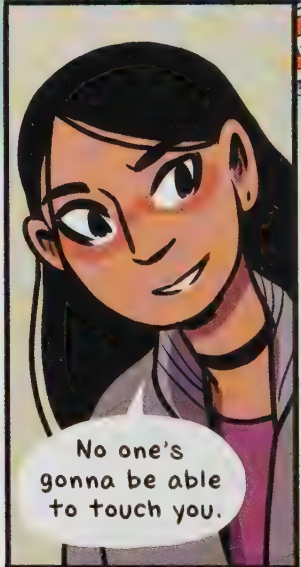
Hey there.



You nervous?

P'shh. Nahh.

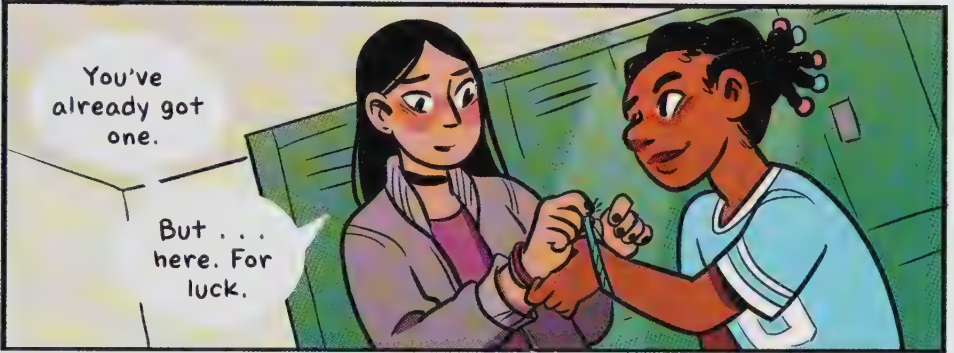
Definitely not.



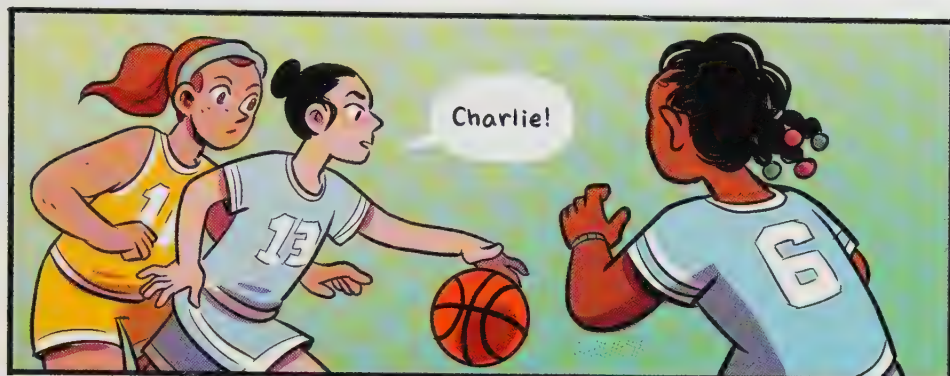
No one's gonna be able to touch you.

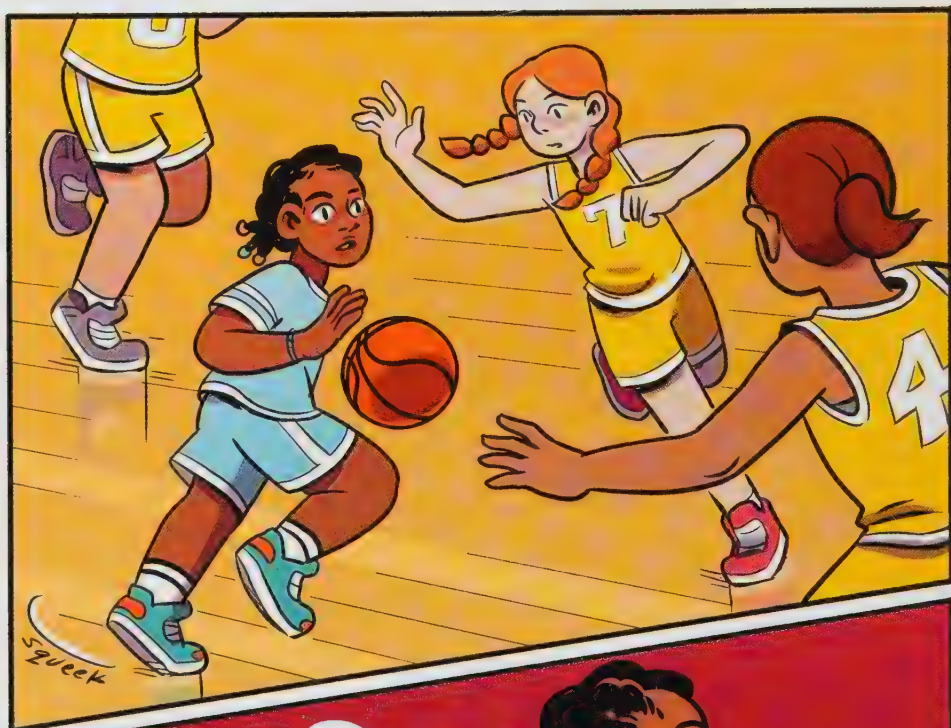


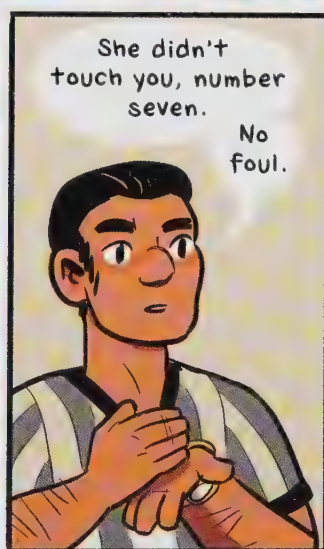
Promise.

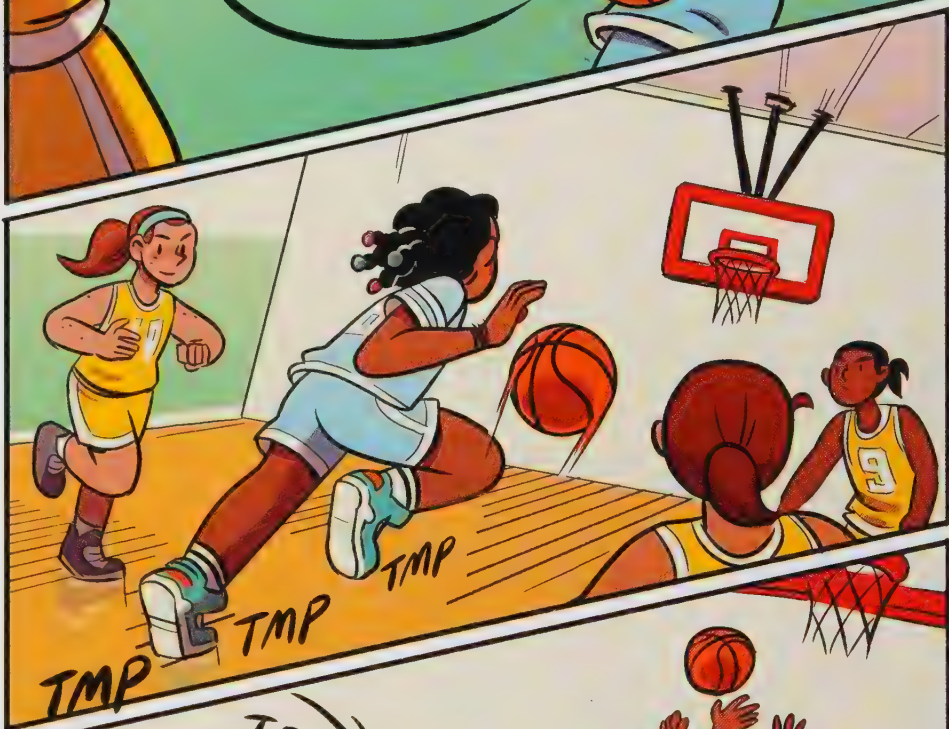






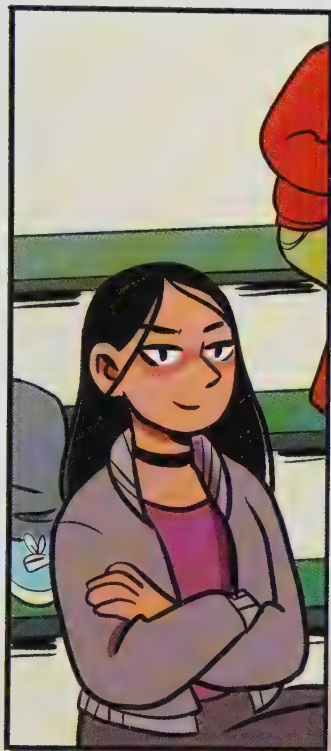
















I can't believe you scored so much in your first game, hon!

I hope that girl is okay, the one who twisted her ankle . . .



You guys have fun?

Yeah!



You kids want to get ice cream to celebrate?

I think we can fit you all in the minivan.







I've been
to a lot of
schools. This
one is . . .



It's pretty
okay.



Wait, so
you're new at
school?

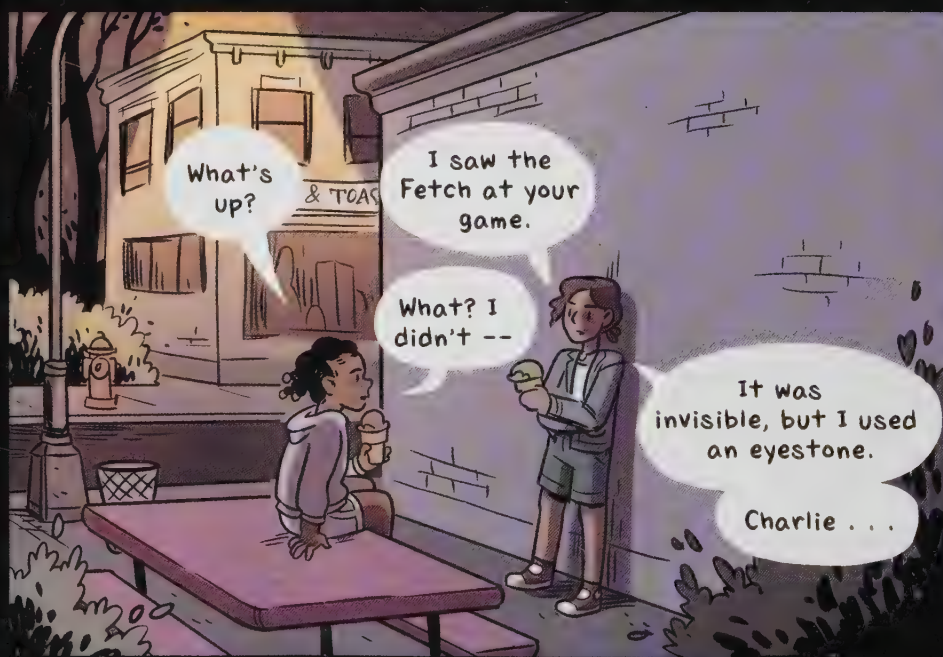
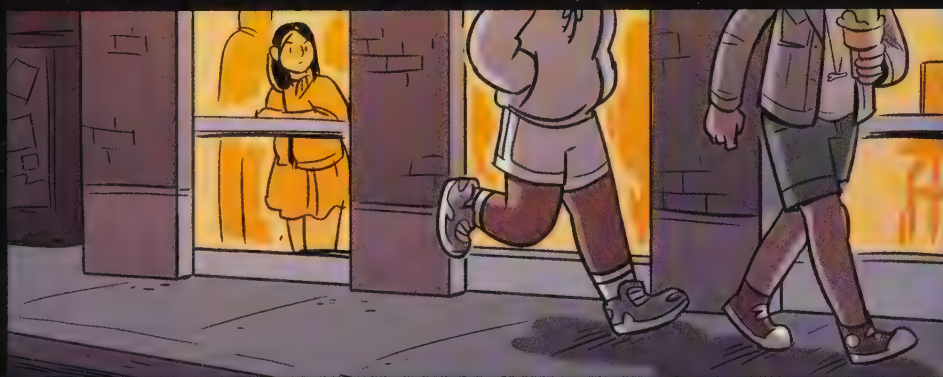


I want to go
to Sterling. You're
the vice principal?

That I am!
Let's see, what kind
of schooling do you get
at home?



Um
. . .



It was helping you. Every time you missed a pass, it sent it back to you.



I knew something weird was going on! I thought it was just, like, beginner's luck.



But who would --

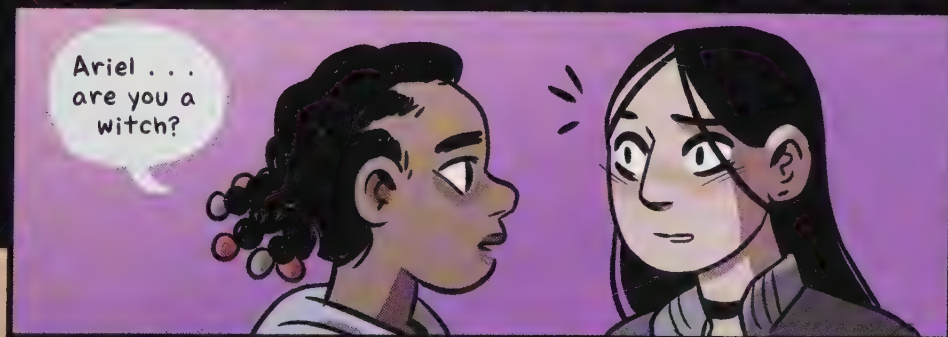
Who is new, and was at the game, and might want to help you?

Well, you.

Or . . .



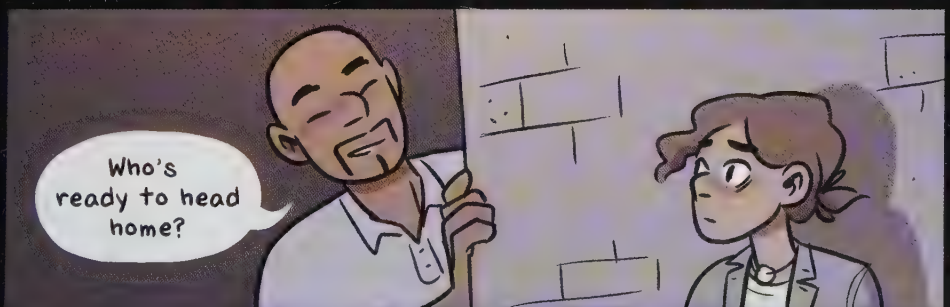
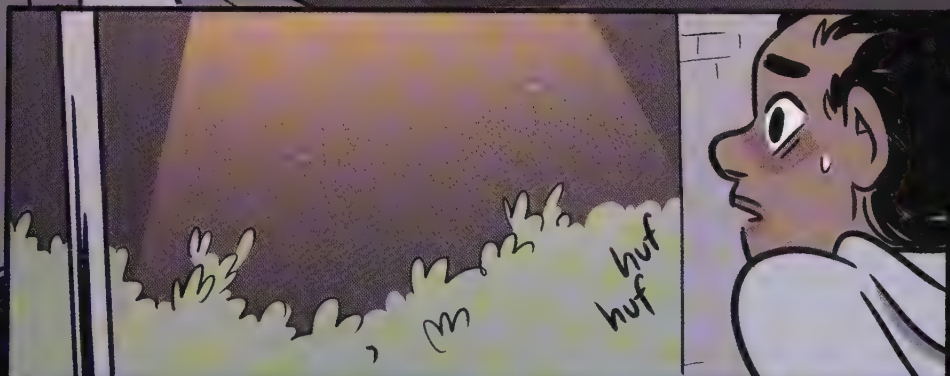


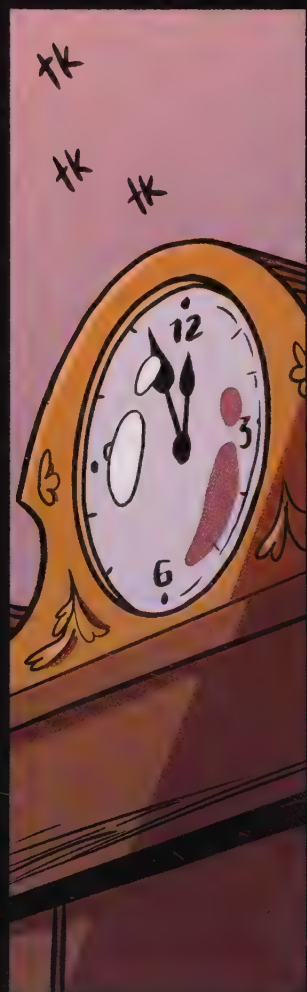












Do you
think she'll be
okay?

I don't
know . . .



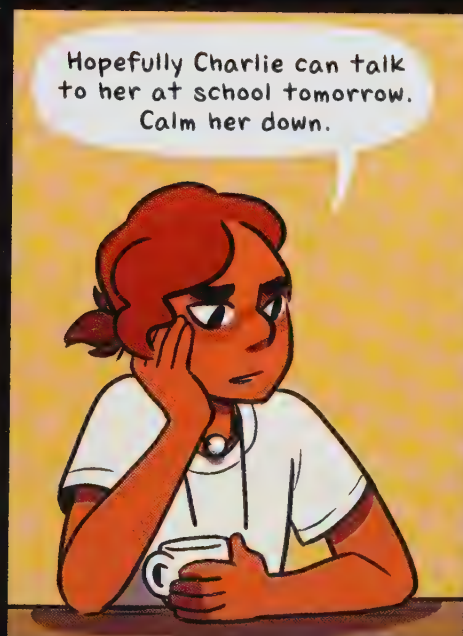
I shouldn't
have confronted
her . . .

I think she didn't
know that anyone else
has magic.



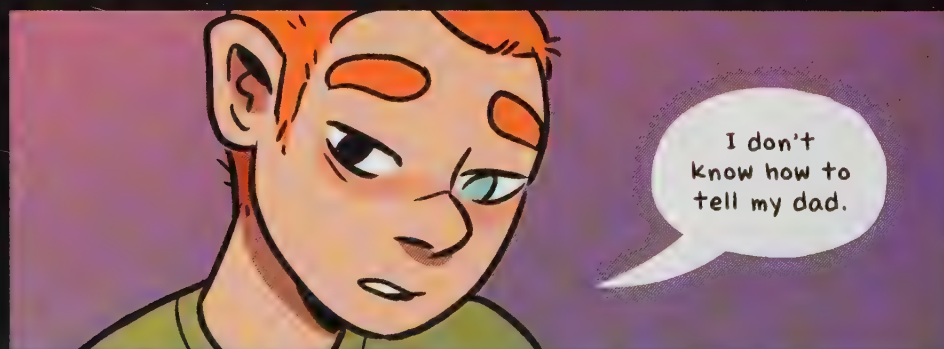
How could
that happen?
Where's her
family?

Who knows?

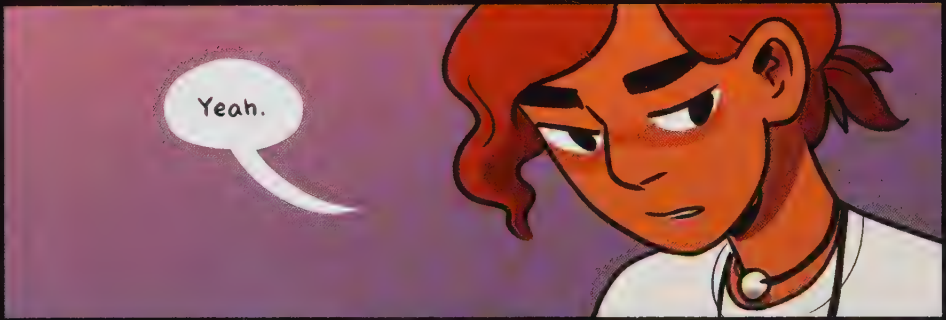


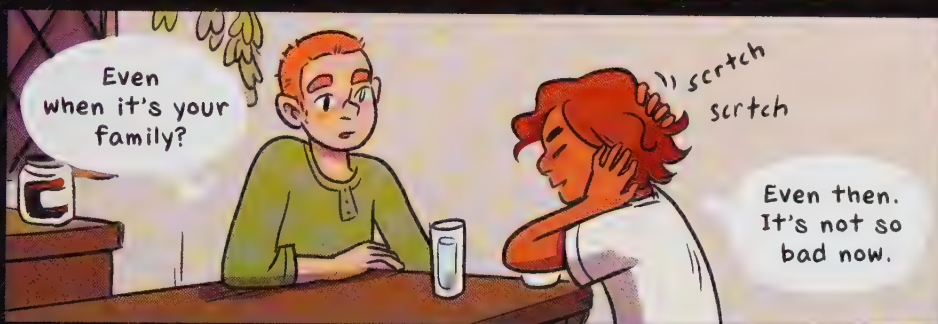
Hopefully Charlie can talk
to her at school tomorrow.
Calm her down.





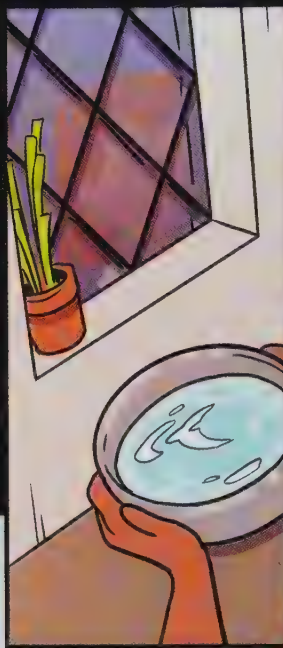




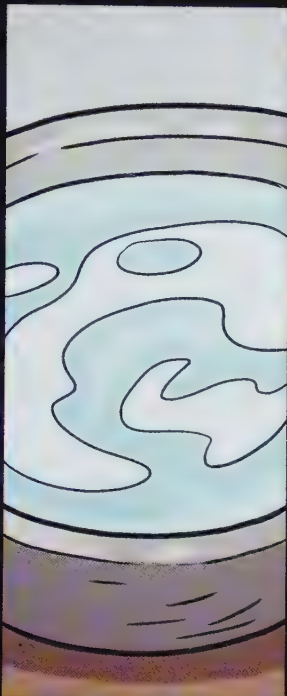








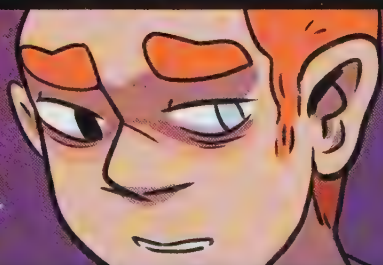
I don't
know how.

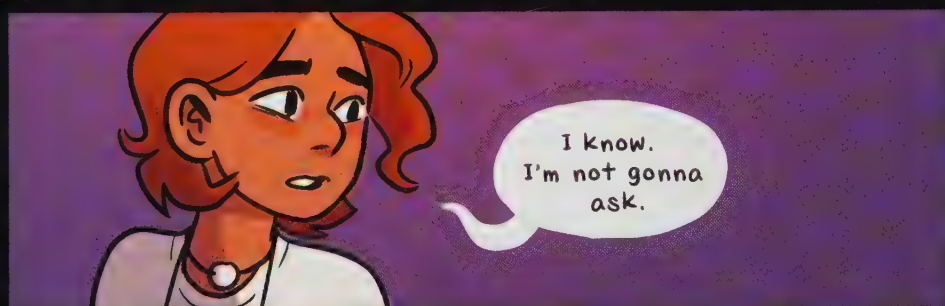


No!

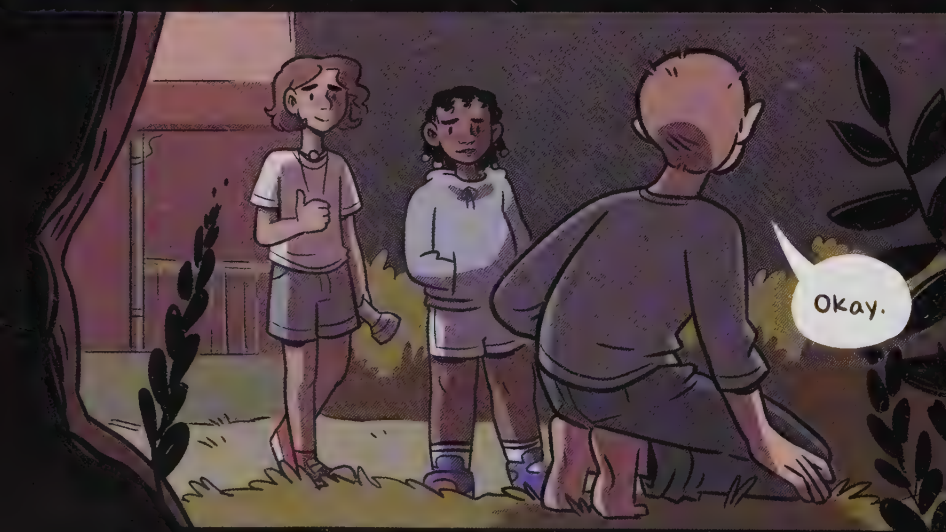


I don't
want to.













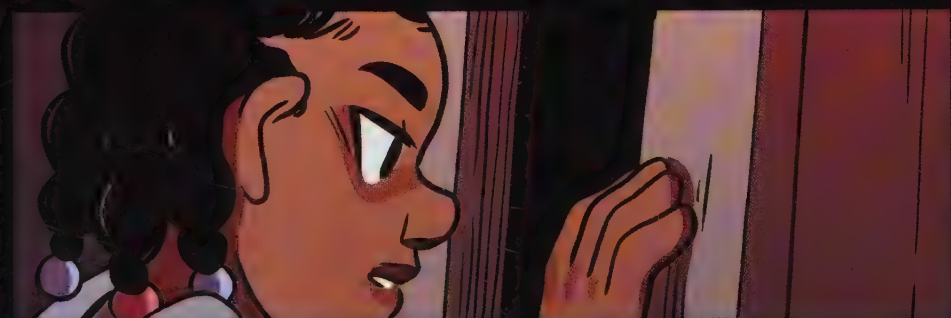








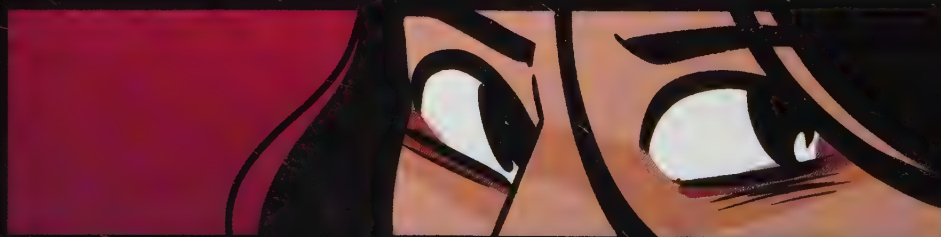














But you
can't keep hurting
people . . . and you
can't expect to
own me.

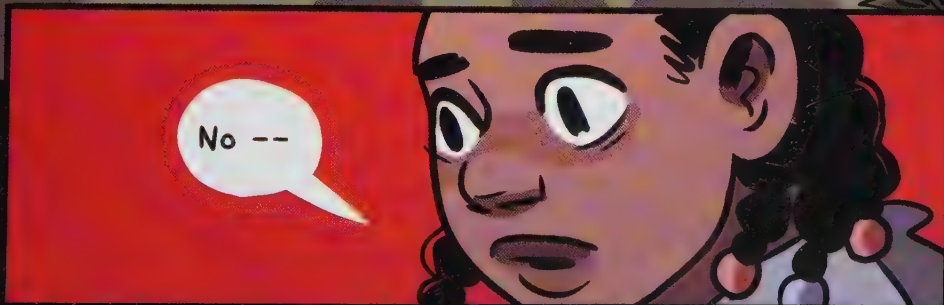


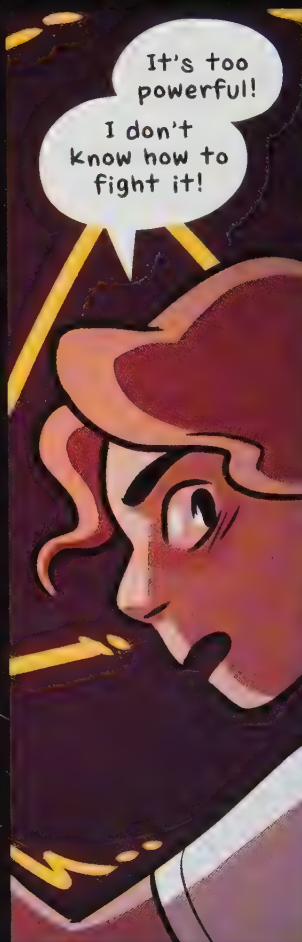
You get to
choose, right now,
if we're gonna keep
being friends.

If you're gonna
stop fighting and
learn how to control
your magic.















Is she
dead?

No, no,
she's breathing,
she --



It got her,
Aster. It went
into her.



Oh no.

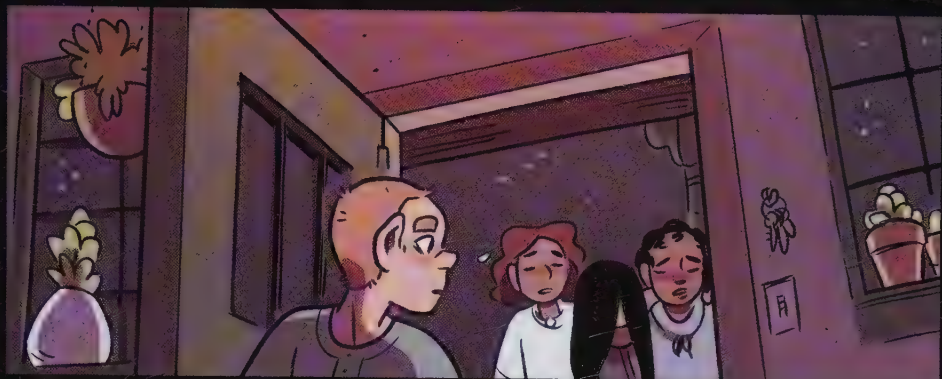


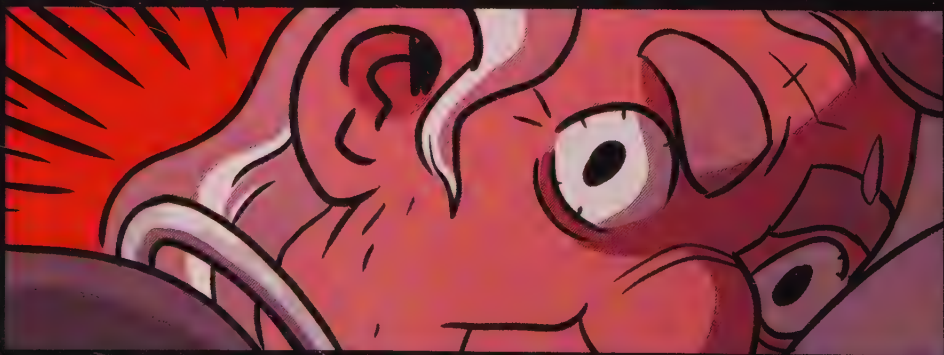
HHNN
ZZZZ











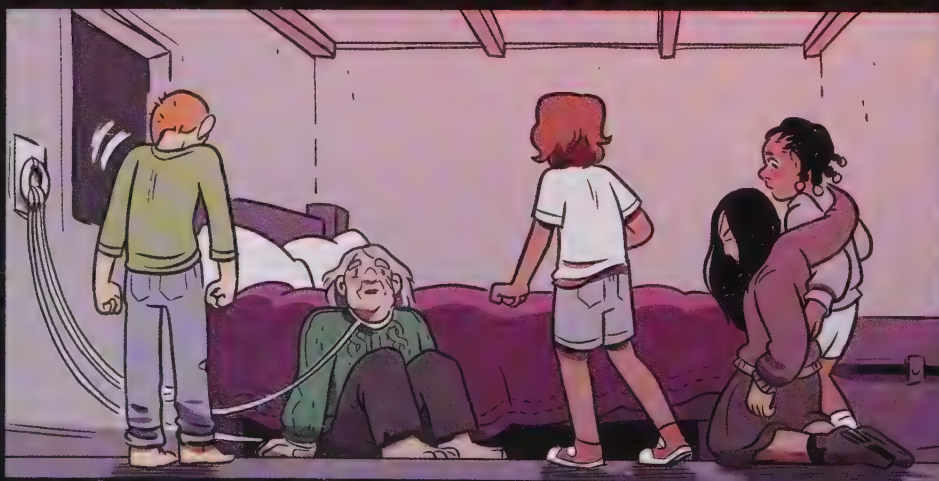


Witches!
Intruders!

I'll eat your
disgusting hearts--



I recognize you...
The shifter
with great talents,
yes? Have you
let yourself be
weakened?



I'm sorry . . . you startled me, and the Beast is still inside . . .





She is very young to have brought such a curse upon herself.



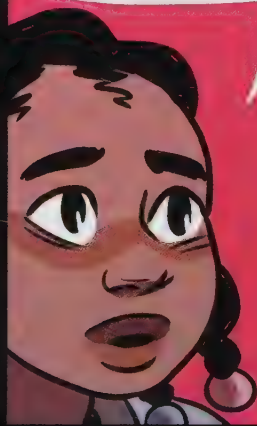
She didn't know how bad it would get.

She . . . she's different, and she's been bullied a lot, and she gets angry.

People can be so mean, sometimes without even realizing it.

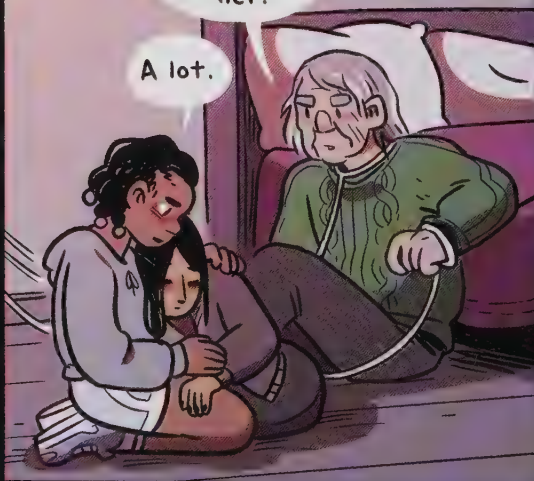


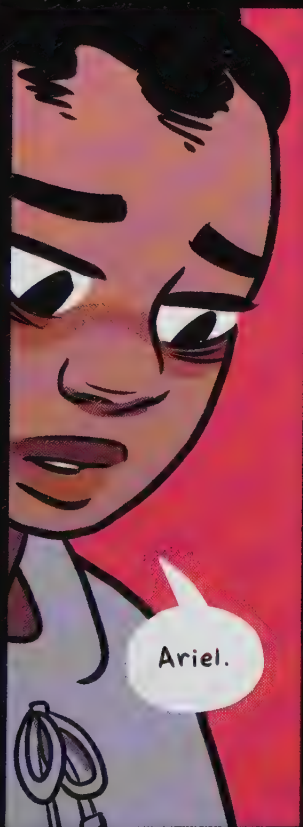
She never knew another way to be or how to use her magic and it's not fair -- please, can't you help her?



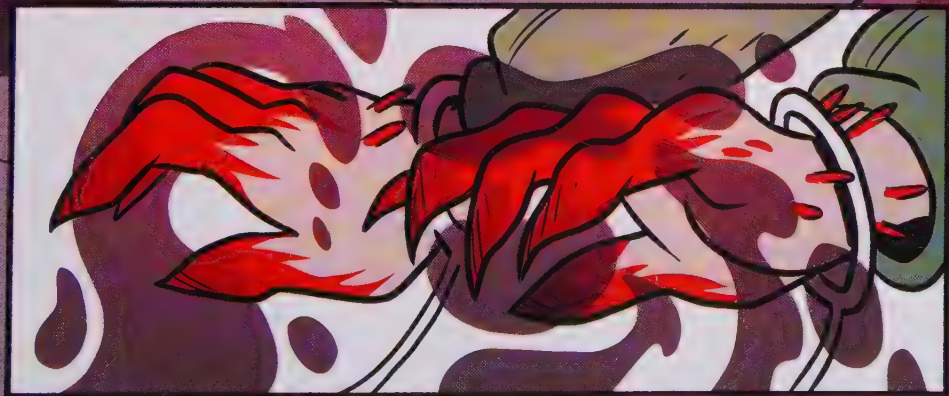
You care about her.

A lot.











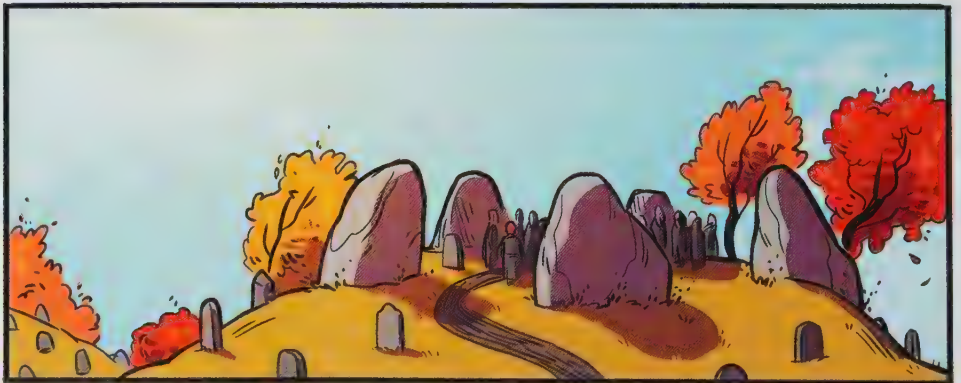


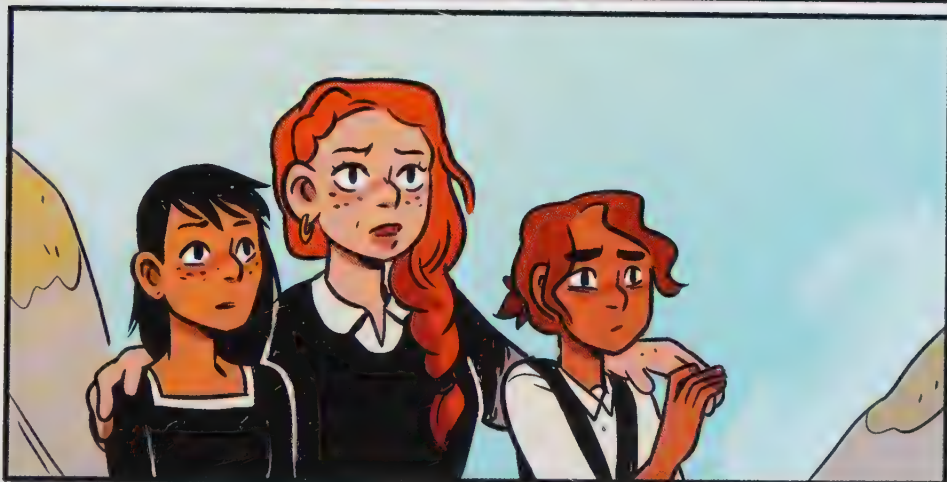


Hey
there.

Hi.

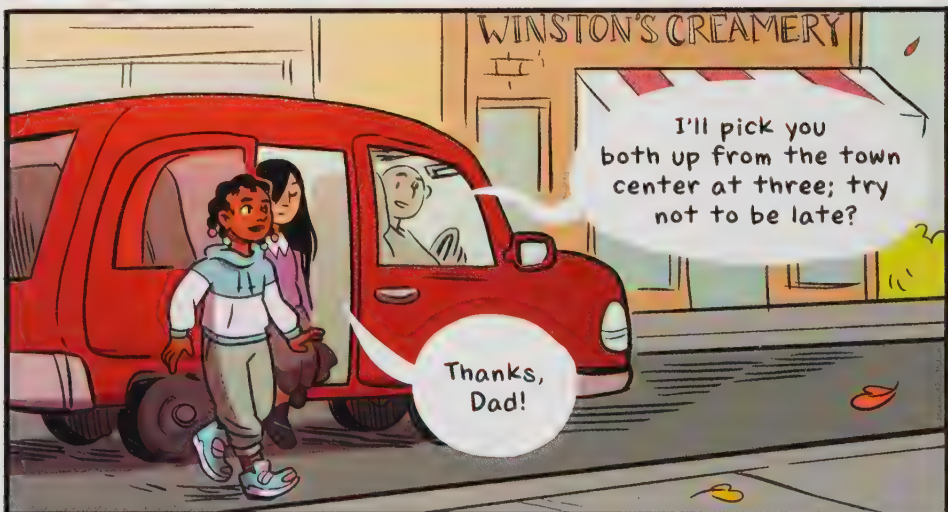
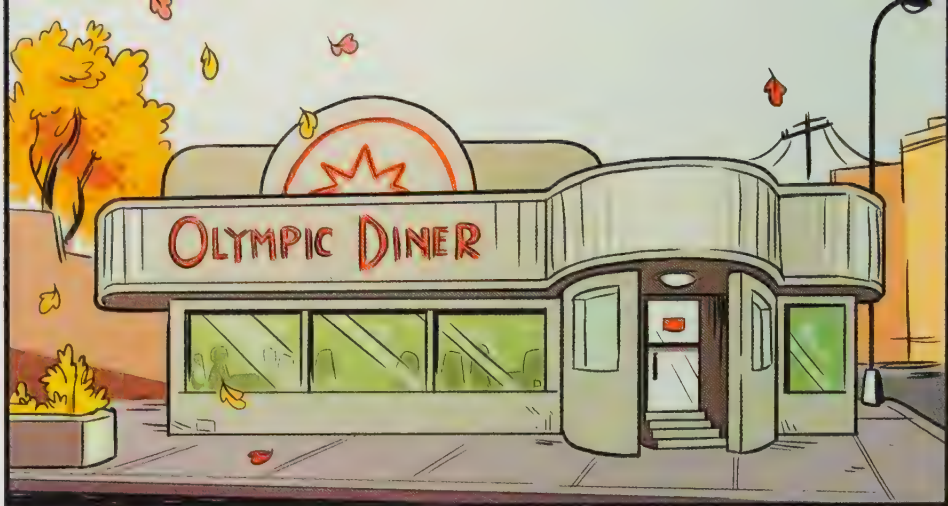


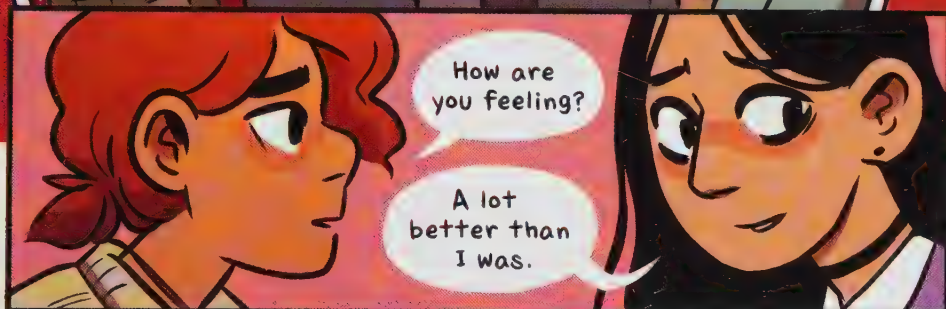




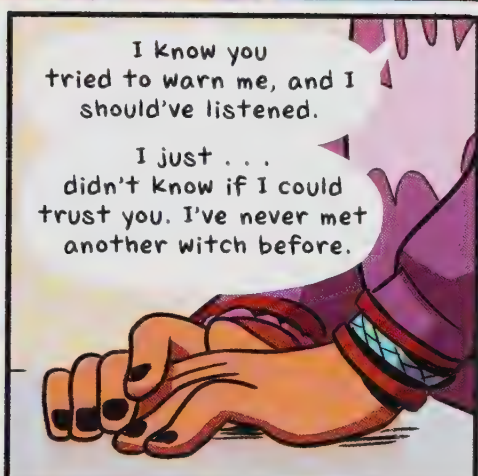




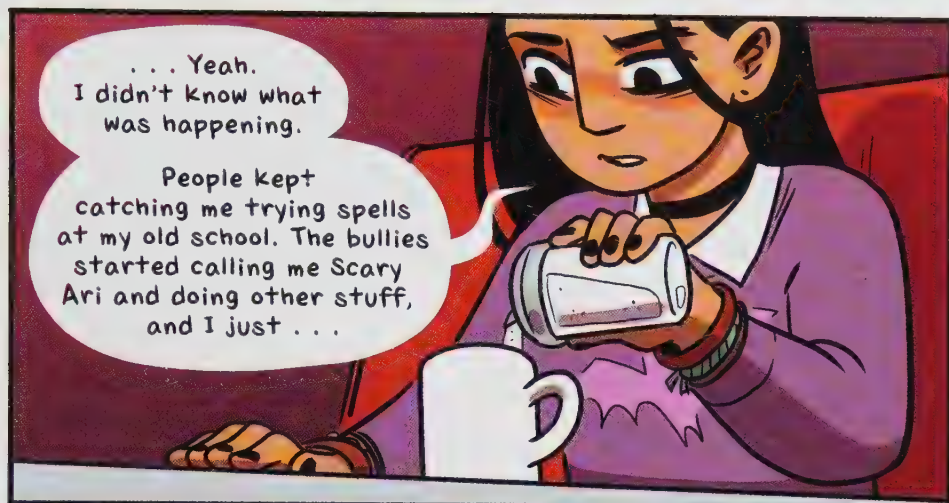














Okay, so my mom
and grandmother wanted
to ask you to please come
take classes with us.

It's not bad to be
able to defend yourself.
But there's so much more to
witchery than summoning
a Fetch.

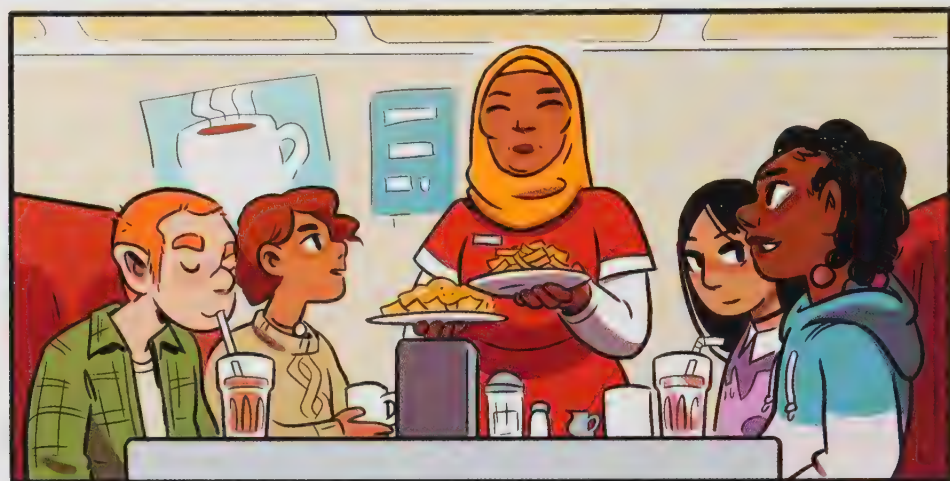


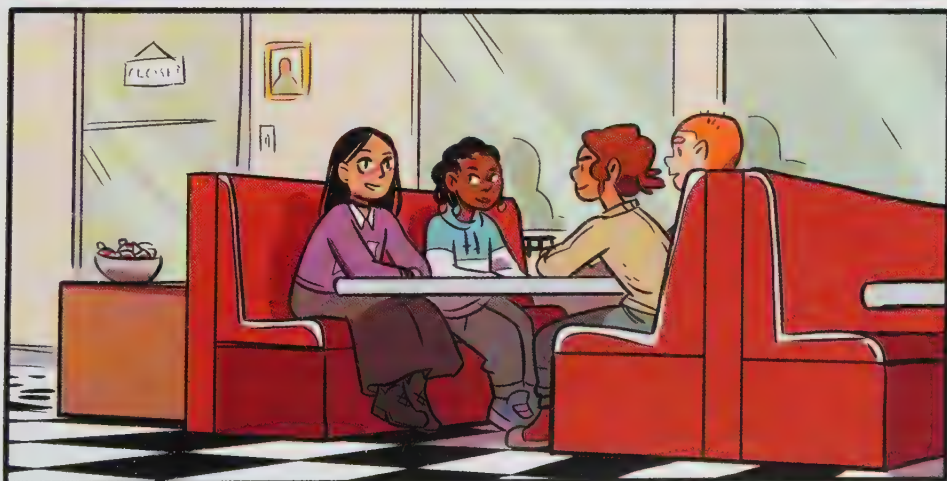
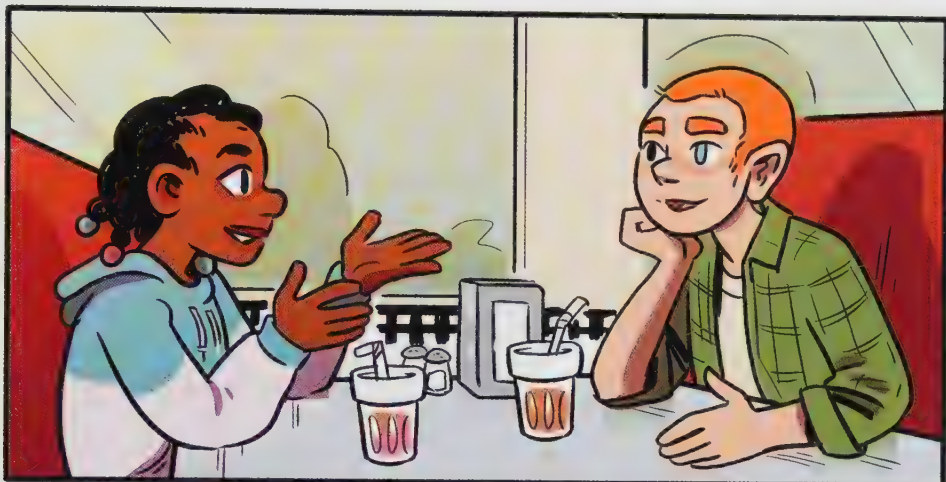
We
can trade
places.



I talked to my
parents, and I'm going to
start going to Sterling
Junior High.

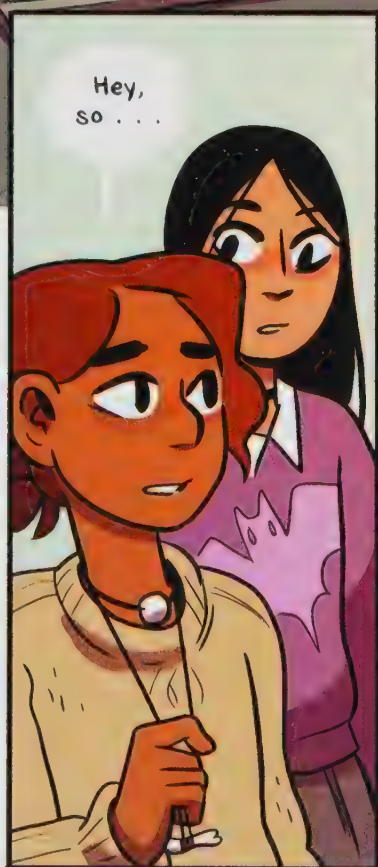








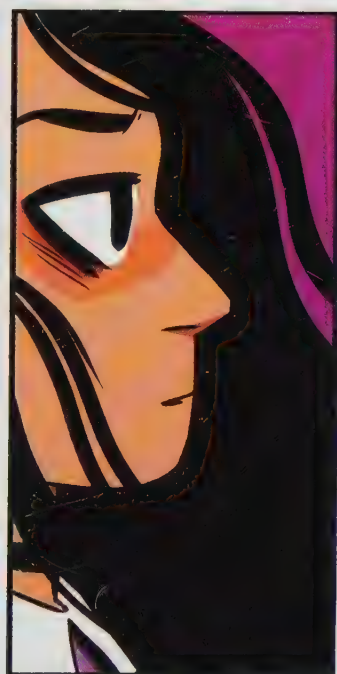
... Starts with homeroom,
we meet up at the beginning of the
day to "do work" but really we just hang
out, and right now there's a competition
to see who can distract Mrs. Sanchez
the most ...



Hey,
so ...



I know how to scry.
If you wanted me to, I
could try to find out where
your parents are?







ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Is the second one always easier, or did I just get lucky? This was one of those graphic novels that flowed so naturally from my first book, *The Witch Boy*, that the process of writing and drawing it was a joy.

I'd like to thank the kind and dedicated people who helped me make it. Jen Linnan, my agent, always responds to my rambling emails and tells me when she has dreams about my cats. Amanda Maciel, my editor, loves these characters at least as much as I do, and always makes time in our discussions to go off track and talk about our shared love of true crime. Phil Falco makes the book look beautiful with his wit and wisdom, and Niki Smith is an amazing artist who helped make the process of coloring this a breeze.

I drew this book with my evenings and weekends while working on the excellent animated show *Star vs. the Forces of Evil*. I really appreciate my coworkers at Disney for many, many coffee trips and our chats about art and comics and storytelling.

The support for *The Witch Boy* from teachers, parents, librarians, independent bookstores, and — most importantly — young readers has meant the world to me. I hope I can keep making books that you enjoy reading!



MOLLY KNOX O'STERTAG

is the author and illustrator of the acclaimed graphic novel *The Witch Boy* and the illustrator of several projects for older readers, including the webcomic *Strong Female Protagonist* and *Shattered Warrior* by Sharon Shinn. She grew up in the forests of upstate New York and graduated in 2014 from the School of Visual Arts, where she studied cartooning and illustration. She currently lives in Los Angeles with her girlfriend and several pets. You can find her online at mollyostertag.com.

EVERY WITCH NEEDS A FAMILY...



Aster's parents have finally agreed that he can learn witchery with the girls, but he has a lot of catching up to do. So when Grandmother offers her tutoring in exchange for a favor, Aster jumps at the chance—until she asks him to help his great-uncle, Mikasi. Family or no, Aster isn't ready to face the beast who nearly destroyed him and his cousins.

Across town, dark magic has attached itself to Aster's friend Charlie. Witches are taught to never create a "Fetch," a cruel shadow form that only does harm. But the thing following Charlie is a clear sign that someone is breaking the rules.

With the help of his family, Aster does everything he can to protect Charlie. But to discover who's making the Fetch and put a stop to it, he'll need darker, more powerful magic—from the most dangerous witch he knows...



PRAISE FOR **THE WITCH BOY**

★ "Leaves readers wishing for more."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "Brims with life."

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

"Thrilling and sweet.

Ostertag is one of comics' brightest new voices."

—*Hope Larson*, author of *All Summer Long*

Cover art © 2018 by Molly Knox Ostertag
Cover design by Phil Falco

graphix

AN IMPRINT OF

SCHOLASTIC

www.scholastic.com

Visit the GRAPHIX site at
www.scholastic.com/graphix

\$12.99 US | \$16.99 CAN

ISBN 978-1-338-25375-7



51299



9 781338 253757